

T W E N T Y S E R M O N S

ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS.

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|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| I. } Of the Wisdom of God | XI. Of the Assistance of God's |
| II. } in the Redemption of | Spirit communicated to all |
| III. } Mankind. | Mankind. |
| IV. Of the Glory of God. | XII. Of St Paul's more excellent |
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| Revelation. | XIII. Of our imitating the Di- |
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| Persons. | XVI. Of the Origin and Sin- |
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| Wicked. | XVII. Of our Meditations. |
| X. Of being renewed in the | XVIII. Of the living Sacrifice |
| Spirit of our Mind. | of our Bodies. |
| | XIX. Of our Love of God. |
| | XX. Of our Love of our Neigh- |
| | bour. |

By CHRISTOPHER HUSSEY, D. D. *K*

Rector of *West-Wickham in Kent*;

AND

Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of *DORSET*.

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MDCCLVIII.

SEERMONS

FOR THE SUBJECTS



CHRISTOPHER HENRY, D.D.

AND

JOHN HENRY, D.D.

TO HIS GRACE THE
Duke of DORSET,

The following DISCOURSES are humbly

Inscribed, by

His GRACE's much obliged

and most obedient

Servant and Chaplain,

CHRISTOPHER HUSSEY.

To His Grace

Duke of DORSET.

The following DISCOURSE are humbly

Presented by



and most obediently

presented and explained

CHRISTOPHER HUSSEY.

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of God, according to the eternal Purpose,
which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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SERMON

S E R M O N I.

Of the Wisdom of God in the Redemption of Mankind.

E P H E S. III. 10, 11.

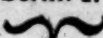
*To the Intent that now unto the Principalities
and Powers in heavenly Places might be
known by the Church the manifold Wisdom
of God, according to the eternal Purpose,
which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

TH E S E Words plainly refer to Serm. I.
what the Apostle had been speaking of before.

After St Paul had given the *Ephesians* to understand, how that by Revelation from God he had received his Knowledge in the Mystery of Christ, which in other Ages was not made known unto the Sons of Men, as it was then revealed unto his holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit,

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he

Serm. I.  he particularly declares what this Mystery was, viz. *That the Gentiles should be Fellow-heirs, and of the same Body, and Partakers of God's Promise in Christ by the Gospel.* Herein consisted the unsearchable Riches of Christ, which the Apostle by the Grace of God was empowered to preach among the Gentiles, and to make all Men see, *what is the Fellowship of the Mystery which from the Beginning of the World had been hid in God.*

And this Mystery began at this Time to be revealed, *to the Intent* (as it is expressed in my Text) *that now unto the Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places might be known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God according to the eternal Purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Many and divers have been the Ways and Methods, which God hath been pleased to take in the Oeconomy of his Church at different Times, and in several Ages of the World. And the divine Counsel and Design in God's Proceedings and Providence towards the Sons of Men have been very dark and mysterious, not only to inspired Persons and the Prophets themselves, but even to Angels and the Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places, as is manifest from what St Peter declares concerning

cerning our Salvation; Of which Salvation, *Serm. I.*
(says he,) the Prophets have enquired, and *1 Peter i.*
searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace *10, 11, 12.*
that should come unto you, searching what or
what manner of Time the Spirit of Christ,
which was in them, did signify, when it testified
beforehand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory
that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed,
that not unto themselves, but unto us they did
minister the Things, which are now reported
unto you by them that have preached the Gos-
pel unto you, with the holy Ghost sent down
from heaven; which Things the Angels desire
to look into.

As from hence it appears, that the
Angels, who behold God's Face in Heaven,
were unacquainted and ignorant of the
Method and Means of Man's Redemp-
tion; so now unto those Principalities
and Powers in heavenly Places is the
Mystery made known, and thereby the
manifold Wisdom of God manifested ac-
cording to his eternal Purpose in Christ Jesus
our Lord.

From whence we may observe, though
the Work of our Redemption be indeed
a great Mystery, and never to be fully
comprehended by us; (for as the Heavens *Isa. lv. 9.*
are higher than the Earth, so are God's Ways
higher than our Ways, and his Thoughts than

Serm. I

our Thoughts;) Though through our short and imperfect View of Things, it may appear to us, as it formerly did unto the *Jews*, a Stumbling-block, and unto the *Greeks* Foolishness; yet if we consider it, as the eternal Purpose of God, and take all the Parts and Circumstances of the whole Design together, as far as they are revealed to us in the holy Scripture, we shall find it to be a most gracious Dispensation of God to Mankind, and full of Wisdom and Counsel; which I shall endeavour to demonstrate in my following Discourse upon this Subject.

The Text manifestly leads me to treat of the Wisdom of God in the first and original Design and End of our Redemption, *according to the eternal Purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Every intelligent Being, who knows and considers what he does, proposes to himself some End or other, to which his Actions tend and are directed; and every good and wise Being pursues an End suitable and answerable to his Wisdom and Goodness. Now God Almighty, as he is the best and wisest Being, when he at first laid the Plan and Design of our Redemption, must have had in View an End proportionable and adequate to his infinite Wisdom and Goodness. And as
he

in the Redemption of Mankind.

5

he for ever foreknew what in Time he intended to accomplish, this End must have been his eternal Purpose; and therefore he must have before the Foundation of the World purposed our Redemption in Christ Jesus our Lord. And our Redemption must be an End and Design wise and good, as proceeding from an Author, who is essentially wise and good; and consequently it must be an Enterprize and Undertaking becoming and worthy of God, who always acts according to his most pure and perfect Nature. Serm. I.

The great and ultimate End of all God's Actions is his own Glory. But as God Almighty is independent and all-sufficient, the great Creator of all Things, and the Author of every good and perfect Gift; so he can stand in need of nothing without himself to encrease or compleat his Happiness, or add to his essential Glory. God is the same Yesterday, and to Day, and for ever, most glorious and happy in the full Possession and Enjoyment of his own infinite Perfections and Excellencies. And all Things, besides himself, having been created by him, no Creature, no, not the whole Creation, can be of any real Use or Benefit to him. Because were the whole Creation to sink and vanish into its primitive Nothing,

Serm. I. God would continue in himself the same infinitely glorious and happy Being. Therefore in this respect the Glory of God cannot be the End of his Purposes and Actions. But though the real Increase and Completion of God's essential Glory be not the End of our Redemption; yet the Manifestation of his most glorious Attributes and Perfections is one great End of it. And this is intimated to us in the Words of my Text. *To the Intent*, says the Apostle, *that now unto Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places might be known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God, according to his eternal Purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Where the Revelation and Discovery of God's manifold Wisdom is declared to be his Intent in the Conversion of the *Gentiles*, or in our Redemption in general.

To illustrate and display in the Sight of Angels and Men God's most excellent Perfections, which constitute his Glory, was undoubtedly one End and Design of God in sending his Son into the World; But this End was closely connected and united with another, the Salvation of Mankind, as is evident from innumerable Places in holy Scripture, I shall mention but one. *In this was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent*

sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him. Sermon I.

The first End and Design of God in our Redemption; the Illustration of his own Glory, includes the other, the Salvation of Man, which is to the Praise of the Glory of his Grace; and both of them, taken together, carry in them the most transcendent Counsel and Wisdom. So that upon a full and impartial View of our Salvation through Christ, we shall perceive it to be a most gracious and wise Scheme, from the Beginning of the World laid and projected by God, and in the Fulness of Time made known unto Angels and Men; tending in its Nature and Design to set forth and promote the Honour and Glory of God, and at the same time calculated to raise and advance the Perfection and Happiness of Man.

These two Ends, proposed and consulted at the same Time by God, when he first designed and projected our Redemption, I shall now consider.

I. In speaking to the first End and Intent of God in our Redemption by Jesus Christ, the Display and Illustration of his own Glory, I shall observe wherein the Glory of God doth consist, as it is dis-

Serm. I. covered and made known to us in holy
 Scripture.

II. In discoursing of the other End of God in our Redemption, as it respects the Salvation of Man, I shall show what is the chief Good, the supreme Happiness, and highest Perfection of Man, and how it is to be obtained.

III. I shall conclude with an Answer to an Objection, which may be made to this Discourse.

I. I shall observe wherein the Glory of God doth consist as it is discovered and made known unto us in holy Scripture. The Glory of God results and springs from the transcendent Excellence and Perfection of the divine Nature. But all that we know of the Nature of God is only so much as we know of the divine Attributes, which constitute his Nature; and as far as those Attributes are manifested and discovered to us by Revelation, or a right Use and Application of our Reason, so far we know of the Deity, or of the Nature of God. But both Reason and Revelation attest, that God is the best and most perfect Being we can conceive.

Now the Perfections of God are usually distinguished into his natural and moral
 Attri-

Attributes; both which conspire and contribute to the Advancement of his Glory, but especially his moral Attributes. And therefore when *Moses* desired God to show him his Glory, he made all his Goodness to pass before him. Thus we read in the Song of *Moses* upon the Overthrow of the Egyptians in the Red-sea, *Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, amongst the Gods? Who is like Thee, glorious in Holiness?* And in *Isaiah*, and the Revelations, we find it thrice repeated, *Holy, holy, holy*, as God's peculiar Attribute. And in the *Psalms*, *The holy One of Israel* is the frequent Title and Appellation singularly given to him.

Serm. I.

Exodus xxxiii. 19.

Exod. xv.

Isa. v. 3.
Rev. iv. 8.

Pf. lxxxix.
18. xcix. 9.

And by the Holiness of God we are to understand not only the Purity of the divine Nature, whence the Prophet *Habakkuk* says of God, *Thou art of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and canst not look on Iniquity;* but the Righteousness and Goodness of God in general is implied in it. So that Holiness is the Sum and Comprehension of all the moral Perfections of God, the supreme Excellence and Glory of the Deity. As therefore we have observed, that one great End and Purpose of God, in all his Works, was the Manifestation of his Glory, or the Display of all his Perfections in general, so more especially the Illustration of all his moral Excellencies,

Habak. i. 13.

Serm. I.

cies, or the Revelation of his Righteousness and Holiness, was one main Intent of the Gospel, or of our Redemption by Christ.

As Righteousness and Holiness is the supreme Excellence and Perfection of every intelligent and rational Being; so God Almighty, who is endued with the most comprehensive Understanding and highest Reason, is the most righteous and holy Being we can conceive. And as God is naturally and essentially righteous and holy in himself; so when he is pleased to exert and exercise his Perfections, all his Operations and Actions are congruous and conformable to the strictest and exactest Rules of true Holiness; or, as King

Psal. cxi. David expresses it, The Lord is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works.

17. This is a first Principle and an Axiom, which we must carefully observe and proceed upon in all our Reasoning and Judgment about the divine Counsels and Designs in any of God's Works. A Conformity of Affection, Will, and Practice to the Nature and Reason of Things, or of their Ideas in the Mind and Intellect, is the true Definition of all Virtue and Goodness, Righteousness, and Holiness. And the most excellent Practice is a good and gracious, just and wise Rule and

and Government over intelligent, rational, Serm. I.
and free Agents. 

The erecting and establishing such a Government over his Creatures, or the constituting a Kingdom of Truth and Righteousness, which shall have no End, is a most excellent Design, a Work highly worthy of God, and tending to advance his Glory; and consequently we may justly lay it down as one great End, which God proposed to himself in the Creation of rational and free Agents in general, either of Men or of Angels. *Thy* Psal. xlv.
Throne, O God! saith the Psalmist, is for ^{6, 7.}
ever and ever; the Sceptre of thy Kingdom is a right Sceptre. Thou lovest Righteousness and hatest Wickedness. Such a Kingdom of everlasting Righteousness is most becoming the supreme Majesty of Heaven and Earth, and most suitable to the infinitely pure and holy Nature of God.

And as Purity and Holiness is the Perfection and Happiness of every rational Being, most consonant to its Rationality, and consequently most agreeable and adapted to its Nature; so this Kingdom of universal Righteousness must be the most happy State of all rational Beings, and a free and voluntary Obedience and Subjection to its righteous Laws and Statutes,
the

Serm. I. the utmost Perfection and supreme Good
of every rational Creature.

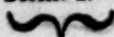
But it must be always remembred, that the Creatures or Subjects of this Kingdom are all free Agents, in which consists the Virtue of their Obedience, and the Glory and Excellence of this Kingdom. For God's Government of rational and free Creatures highly excels his Providence over the material World; as far as a Kingdom over a free People is more glorious, than the Command over Stocks and Stones, or over brute Beasts, or over Slaves and Vassals, who have entirely lost their Liberty and Freedom of Action.

But as rational Creatures pay a voluntary and free Obedience to the Laws of God's Kingdom, so they may act contrary to its Laws; they may pervert and abuse their Liberty and Freedom of Will, though a most excellent Gift and Endowment in itself, to very ungrateful and impious Designs and Actions, and so be the Occasion and original Cause of Evil and Sin, and bring down upon themselves God's Wrath and Vengeance, justly due to Traitors and Rebels, which they will for ever endure to their unspeakable Misery and Torment.

This is the Case of the fallen Angels and damned Spirits; hence at first came
Sin

Sin into the World, hence the Fall of our first Parents in Paradise, and hence the Corruption and Depravity of our Nature in all their Posterity ever since. For the fallen Angels having made God their Enemy by their Apostasy and wicked Practices, they became odious and hateful to him, and in return were Haters of him, and of all Righteousness and Goodness; and therefore they plotted and combin'd together to seduce and deceive all they could to join with them in their Rebellion against the divine Majesty, and to set up a Kingdom of Wickedness and Darkness, in Opposition to God's Kingdom of Truth and Righteousness. And for this Reason the Devil was diligent and assiduous to defeat, as far as he was able, God's Purpose and Design in the Formation of Man, by tempting him to disobey God's express Command, and so to become an Apostate and Rebel like himself. But as God from the Beginning knew this unhappy Event, so in Mercy he provided a Remedy against it, by forecasting and contriving the amazing Method and Means of our Salvation, according to his eternal Purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Which brings me,

Serm. I.



II. 2dly, To discourse of the other End of God in our Redemption, viz. the Happiness of Man: which will be illustrated and manifestly appear to tend to the Advancement of God's Glory, when we consider what is the chief Good, the supreme Happiness and highest Perfection of Man; and how it is to be obtained.

Gen. i.
27.

Now the chief and supreme Happiness of Man is the Perfection of his rational Nature. Herein is Man allied and related to the Angels and blessed Spirits above, and herein consists the Image and Resemblance which he bears of God himself. This is agreeable to the Account *Moses* gives us of Man's Creation. *So God created Man in his own Image, in the Image of God created he him.* In the Image and Favour of God Man's Happiness always did, and ever will consist. And therefore, when *Adam* by his Transgression, thro' the Artifice and Stratagem of the Devil, had defaced the one, and lost the other, God still retained some Pity and Compassion for his poor miserable Creature, and in his infinite Wisdom and Counsel, before the Foundation of the World, made Provision to prevent the utter Ruin and Destruction of Man, by the Interposition of his most dearly beloved Son,
our

our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who Serm. I. restored Man to God's Favour again, by enabling him to recover the divine Image, the Pattern after which he was at first made.

And as we have before proved, that Holiness or Righteousness is the supreme Excellence and Perfection of God, and his chief Glory; so it is the highest Dignity and Honour, and Happiness of Man, in which he most eminently bears the true Image and Likeness of God, and in which our Humanity approaches the nearest to the Deity; whereby, according to St Peter, *are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises, that by these you might be Partakers of the divine Nature.* 2 Pet. i. 4. And what greater Honour, what higher Glory can there be than this? It was the Pride and Ambition of *Lucifer* to aim at an Equality with God, and sit in the Throne with the Most High, but it prov'd his Ruin and Downfal; whereas to resemble God in Purity and Holiness is both our Duty and Happiness, and will be for ever our Glory.

Thus hath God consulted the Glory of his great Name in erecting a Kingdom of everlasting Righteousness, and at the same time projected and designed our eternal Glory and Happiness, in making
Righ-

Serm. I.

Righteousness and Goodness the Laws and Decrees of this Kingdom; wherein no unclean Person hath any Inheritance, or can ever enter. For as *the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost; so the Heirs of this Kingdom must be pure, as he is pure; and holy, as he is holy; for without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.*

The Righteousness of God, the Truth and Holiness and Purity of his divine Nature, or in a word, the absolute Rectitude of the Deity is the Foundation, the Spring and Principle of all that is morally good and excellent; a general Principle and sovereign Law, which runs through, rules and governs, and presides over all his other Attributes. Because a Love of Truth and Righteousness, is the primary Excellence and Perfection, therefore it is the Affection of God. Because to do Good and to communicate Being and Happiness, is a right and true and rational Practice, therefore God is beneficent, kind, and bountiful. Because it is worthy and decent and becoming the great Sovereign Lord and King of the Universe, to act according to the eternal and immutable Laws of Truth and Righteousness; therefore God governs all
his

his Creatures with Goodness and Wisdom, Justice and Equity, with Clemency, Forbearance, and Mercy. But because by Sin, God's essential Righteousness was violated, his infinite Majesty injured and insulted, his Authority and Laws denied and contemned, his Power defied, and an Opposition and Rebellion rais'd in his Kingdom of everlasting Truth and Holiness; and should the Crime be pass'd over with Neglect and Impunity, it would be a Dishonour and Disgrace to his righteous Government, and tend to encourage his Subjects and Servants in their Disobedience and Disloyalty for the future; upon this Account it was right and wise and just, that some Satisfaction should be made for the Injury and Offence, which was of an infinite Guilt, as against an infinite Majesty, by his most unworthy, base, and ungrateful Creature; and the Satisfaction ought to bear a Proportion to the Crime: But the greater the Dignity and Excellence of the Person is, who suffers for it, and the greater his sufferings, so much greater is the Satisfaction and Amends: Therefore God was pleas'd to permit his only Son voluntarily and of his own Accord to come down from Heaven, and take our Nature upon him,

C

Serm. I. him, and suffer Death upon the Cross,
 that he might be a Sacrifice and Propi-
 ation for our Sins. And in this was
 manifested the Righteousness and Wis-
 dom of God, as well as *Love towards us,*
because that he sent his only begotten Son into
the World, that we might live through him.
 1 John iv. 9. So that we see Righteousness is the chief
 Ingredient, and principally regarded in
 all the Operations and Proceedings of
 God. This is the Center of Unity,
 Agreement, and Concord, which renders
 all the Perfections of God consistent and
 compatible, consonant, harmonious and
 glorious.

To declare therefore the Righteousness
 of God in our Redemption, was an End
 and Design of the most transcendent Wis-
 dom and Counsel, in which the Glory of
 the divine Nature and Attributes is most
 fully illustrated and demonstrated, and
 the eternal Salvation and Happiness of
 Man, best contrived and proposed.

Well therefore does this Dispensation
 and Oeconomy of infinite Wisdom de-
 serve our most serious Thoughts and Con-
 templations, as it is of the highest Impor-
 tance and Concernment to us; And there-
 fore ought to be the great Business and
 Study of our Life to attain to the true
 Knowledge of it. But this brings me,

3dly,

III. 3^{dly}, To conclude with an Answer to an Objection, which may be made to this Discourse. For here it may be asked, why did God at first create Beings of such a Nature, and endow them with such Powers and Faculties, which he foreknew they would pervert and abuse, and thereby bring great Evil and Sin into the World, to their own Unhappiness and Misery? How is this consistent with God's infinite Wisdom and Goodness in the Creation of these Beings? In Answer to this we must consider God's original End and Design, when he purposed to begin the Formation of the Universe; which we may be sure was most excellent, worthy, and becoming the Deity, and all his divine Perfections, and agreeable to his most pure and holy Nature. But the highest Excellence we can conceive is a Kingdom of everlasting Truth and Righteousness, and the Happiness of all rational Creatures consists in being made Subjects of this Kingdom; and therefore we may justly conclude, it was the Intention and Design of God from the Beginning to erect a righteous Kingdom; and to create Beings of such a Nature and with such Faculties, as that they might become capable of being sub-

Serm. I. ject and obedient to his Government.
 ~~~~~ And in this Subjection and Obedience to God, as the supreme Lord and Governor of the Universe, all rational Beings, both Angels and Men, might have for ever lived, and enjoyed all the Blessings of his Kingdom, and delighted themselves in the Light of his favourable Countenance.

But all true Obedience is a rational and free Service, and depends upon its Reasonableness and voluntary Choice, wherein its Virtue and Acceptableness to God consist, and in which the Happiness of the Creature is placed. It was therefore righteous and just, wise and good in God to confer on his Creatures, Liberty and Freedom of Will in the Use and Exercise of their Powers and Capacities, whereby they might become true and faithful Subjects of his Kingdom, and live under his Care and Protection, and partake of all the Benefits and Blessings of his benign Providence. Herein God's Righteousness and Wisdom and Goodness are manifest and plainly appear to all intelligent Beings, and ought to be very gratefully and thankfully received and acknowledged by them.

But some of God's Creatures refused and despised the Blessings of his righteous

teous Kingdom, turn'd Rebels against his supreme Majesty, and were the Authors and Abettors of all Sin and Wickedness. The Favours and good Gifts of their Nature God originally conferred upon them, they made use of to his Dishonour and Contempt by their unrighteous Practices, and what might have been their Glory and Happiness was perverted to their Confusion and Misery. This was owing to their Abuse of their free Agency, a most excellent Endowment in itself, as it is the Principle of all Virtue and Goodness, and Foundation of all true Happiness, when rightly put to its proper Use; but when applied to the Commission of Sin and Evil, the Spring and Fountain of all Misery, which wicked Spirits voluntarily bring upon themselves.

Now from the Beginning, before the Creation of any of his Works, God foresaw the future Event of all his Operations, and the Consequence of all the Doings and Actions of his Creatures; how they would use the Gifts and Favours he bestowed upon them; particularly how rational Creatures would freely chuse to act, and the Sin and Misery, they would be the Authors of by chusing to act wickedly: All the Evils and Mischief,



Serm. I. Disorder and Calamities, which have ever been in the World, followed the Abuse of their free Agency; which God permitted, as the Effect of their own voluntary Doing, and what they might have escaped by their due Obedience to him.

But when God's rational Creatures misapplied their natural Powers and Faculties, and instead of using them to the Honour and Glory of their great Author and kind Donor, and their own eternal Happiness, they voluntarily and freely perverted them by wickedly turning them against their almighty Benefactor, to their own eternal Shame and Confusion, God suffered them to reap the Fruit of their Ingratitude and Impiety, and to bring down utter Ruin and Destruction upon themselves, when they might have for ever lived and enjoyed the inestimable Blessings of his heavenly Kingdom.

Which Blessings that we all may obtain by our dutiful Obedience and Submission to his most holy Will and Pleasure, God of his infinite Goodness and Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom,  
&c.

28 SE60

S E R M O N

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## S E R M O N II.

Of the Wisdom of God in the Redemption of Mankind.

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E P H E S. III. 10, 11.

*To the Intent that now unto the Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places might be known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God, according to the eternal Purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I Have in a late Discourse upon these Serm. II. Words attempted to set forth the Wisdom of God in our Redemption through Christ; but as the Subject is of the highest Dignity and last Importance, I shall further consider it, though I may repeat some Things I have before said upon this Argument.

In our discoursing and reasoning about the divine Nature in the first Place it is

Serm. II.

absolutely necessary, that we have a just Conception of God; and therefore we ought to be very careful what Notion we form in our Minds of him; for according to this Notion will be our Opinion and Judgment of him and of his Ways and Works. Now the best and truest Apprehension of God is the Idea of the most excellent Being we can conceive, who is endued with all possible Perfection; and God's Excellency consists both in his Natural and Moral Perfections; but most especially in his Moral, which are the Ornament and Beauty of his Natural Attributes. But the Sum and Comprehension of all Moral Perfections is Righteousness. Therefore God Almighty must be the most Righteous Being we can possibly conceive.

But Righteousness in general is founded in the Nature and Reason of Persons and Things, or of their Ideas; a Conformity to which is Truth; and a Practice according to Truth from a Principle of Love and Affection to it, is just and right, good and excellent, and is the proper Notion of all Righteousness and Holiness, Virtue and Goodness.

But a righteous Practice may be more or less excellent according to the Persons and Things upon which it is exercised;  
in

in Proportion to the Dignity and Importance of which will be its Excellence. But the most excellent Practice is the righteous Administration and Government of all Things, especially of intelligent, rational, and free Agents, who only are the true and proper Subjects of all Rule and Government, and from hence it follows that a Kingdom of Righteousness is the supreme Excellence, and consequently the most worthy of God to erect and establish, as he is the most excellent Being. Serm. II.

In the Beginning therefore when God created the Heavens and the Earth, we may justly conclude, his principal Intention and Design was to set up a Kingdom of Righteousness, and to make Beings of different Orders and Degrees, and to endue them with their peculiar Natures and Properties, that they might be true and faithful Subjects of his Kingdom, and render unto him due Honour and Allegiance, true Worship and Obedience, which is their reasonable Service, and consequently which they are obliged to perform as his rational Creatures.

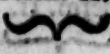
This Duty immediately arises from their Rational Nature, and what is dictated to them by their pure and uncorrupted Minds, and what they cannot help being sensible and conscious of within themselves;



Serm. II.

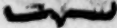
elves; but as they are endowed with a natural Liberty and Freedom of Will, they can of themselves chuse or refuse to follow and comply with the Dictates and Suggestions of their own Consciences. But the formal Nature of all Virtue, Gratitude, and Obedience depends upon the Freedom of the Will, and consists in a free and voluntary Performance. So that to make Creatures capable of true Obedience to their Creator, and proper Subjects of God's righteous Kingdom, it is requisite and necessary they should be made free Agents, and be endued with a Power and Faculty of determining their own Actions, as far as relates to the Morality of them; so that they may be justly accountable for their Rectitude or Obliquity.

And as Freedom of Will is a necessary Ingredient of all Righteousness in general, wherein it especially consists, and without which it would immediately vanish; So Righteousness is a Qualification and an Affection absolutely requisite to the Perfection and Happiness of every Rational Being. For the Happiness of any Being consists in the Perfection of its Nature, and the Perfection of a Rational Nature is its Righteousness. So that to make reasonable Creatures  
capa-

capable of attaining and enjoying true Happiness, God was pleased to endow them with a Power of free Agency, that their Happiness might depend upon their own voluntary Choice and Approbation. Liberty therefore of Will was an excellent Gift of God, and a Kindness conferred upon his Creatures for their greatest Benefit and Good. 

But from the Nature of free Will and Liberty of Action it unavoidably follows, that this Endowment, so excellent in itself, may be abused and perverted and misapplied to the Commission of great Sins and Wickedness. So that what was given of God out of pure Grace and as a peculiar Favour and distinguishing Honour and Dignity to his Rational Creatures, was by the Ingratitude and Disobedience of some of them turned to their Dishonour and Confusion, Destruction and Misery; and from hence derived the Origin of Evil, hence sprung all the Sins and Impiety which have ever been in the World.

For the wicked Angels in Heaven, dissatisfied with their Subjection to the Divine Majesty, and uneasy at their dependent State, (though the most happy, and blessed with the Light and Joy of God's Countenance,) forgot their Duty  
and

Serm. II.  and Gratitude to their most munificent Benefactor, and their Faith and Allegiance to their sovereign Lord and King, but turned Apostates and Traitors, and raised a Rebellion in God's Kingdom of Truth and Righteousness, and opposed his Rule and Government, though administered by the most just and holy Laws. And to this End they combine and conspire together to erect a Kingdom of Deceit and Falshood, Idolatry, and Wickedness, and are diligent and assiduous to raise and advance its Power and Dominion, by seducing others into their Apostasy, to enlist themselves under their Banner, and to wage War against the Lord of Hosts. Thus did Satan beset our first Parents in Paradise, and by his artful Insinuations and specious Suggestions prevail upon them to distrust God, and disobey his express Command, that thereby they might incur the Divine Displeasure, and become Objects of Vengeance and Misery like himself; and thus did he continue afterwards to ensnare and captivate Mankind and to make them Slaves and Vassals of his Diabolical Kingdom of Ignorance and Error, Superstition and Idolatry and Impiety, introducing into the World the most abominable Rites and Customs, the most unnatural Vices, Cruelty, and Inhumanity. And

And this wicked Empire and Tyranny of the Devil over the Heathen World, God was pleased to permit for a Time, to let Mankind see and experience the pernicious and dire Effects and Consequences of forsaking and disobeying their Maker and only Benefactor; though he still had in the World a chosen Generation and a select People, who worshipped him only, and were Witnesses of his supreme Power and Government and Administration of all human Affairs, by his Protection over them and Defence against their Enemies on all sides, while they continued stedfast in their Obedience to him, and constantly observed his Statutes and kept his Laws. But in due Time God sent his only begotten Son into the World to deliver Mankind out of the Hands of their Enemies, to destroy the Works of the Devil, and subvert his Kingdom of Wickedness and Darkness, and in its room to set up a Kingdom of everlasting Truth and Righteousness. And though God in his own good Time sent his beloved Son into the World to redeem Mankind; yet this was his Eternal Purpose; and the Scheme and Plan and whole Oeconomy of Man's Salvation by the Death of Christ, was projected and laid from the Beginning  
in



Serm. II. in the Wisdom and Counsel of his  
 own Will. For as God hath created all  
 Things, and for his Pleasure they are  
 and were created; So in his Grace and  
 Mercy, he was pleased wisely to project  
 and contrive the Method and all the  
 Means of our Redemption, which in his  
 infinite Prescience and Foreknowledge  
 immediately lay open and manifest to his  
 all comprehensive Mind before the Founda-  
 tion of the World.

All Righteousness supposes Under-  
 standing and Knowledge and Wisdom;  
 For the Moral Attributes of God are  
 the free and voluntary Exertion and Ex-  
 ercise of his natural Perfections accord-  
 ing to the Reason and Nature of Things,  
 which are perfectly understood and  
 comprehended, thoroughly weighed, con-  
 sidered, and truly compared together in  
 his omniscient Mind and Intellect. For  
 before the Existence or Creation of any  
 Thing God knew the Nature and Pro-  
 perties of all Things by their Ideas only,  
 which pre-existed in the Divine Mind  
 before the actual and real Formation of  
 the Things themselves, which were made  
 according to the Model and Pattern of  
 these Ideas. And as the Nature and Pro-  
 perties of all Things were perfectly known  
 to God before their Existence, so when  
 com-

compared together were their several Respects and Relations, with the Rule and Reason of acting accordingly. As therefore God Almighty is the most righteous Being in the World, so is he the most intelligent and wisest; and as by the Excellency of his Prescience he foresees and foreknows all Things future, before they have any Being; so before the Creation of the World or of any Thing in it, he foresaw all Things that would ever come to pass in the World, and most wisely and prudently provided against all Events whatsoever.

The Nature and Properties therefore of all Things in the Beginning were intimately foreknown to God; he foresaw the Motions and Actions of all his Creatures, whether Animate or Inanimate, Rational or Irrational. Particularly the Moral Conduct and Behaviour of reasonable and free Agents was foreseen by him, and the good Use or Abuse of the free Agency, he permitted them to exercise; all the future Effects and Consequences of their voluntary Determinations Resolutions and Proceedings, were present and open to his full Inspection. When therefore he gave Being to and enabled all his Creatures to live and move and act according to their several and peculiar

Serm. II.

liar Natures, the Result and Event of all their Motions and Operations was wisely considered and consulted by him, and nothing was permitted to come to pass without his Knowledge at least, if not by his particular Appointment and Direction. Thus all Things are pre-determined and ordered by the Wisdom and Prudence of God, and the World and all Things in it ruled and governed by him, and his Care and Providence over his Creatures is effectual and certain and constantly to be relied and depended upon by them. And as thus all Things in general are wisely disposed and governed by the good Providence of God; so more especially his Kingdom of everlasting Righteousness is the peculiar Object of his Care and Concernment, as the principal End and Design of the Creation of all other Things, was to set up and establish this Kingdom throughout the Universe: and rational Creatures, both Angels and Men, who are the most considerable Part of all God's Works, are only qualified and capable by the Excellency and Preeminence of their Nature, of being Subjects of his righteous Kingdom; therefore the Governance of them by the best and wisest Laws hath ever been the

the View and Tendency of all his Dis- Serm. II.  
pensations and Proceedings with them. 

For it is absurd to think God should purpose and intend to erect a Kingdom from the Beginning, and take no Thought nor Care about it, after he had established it; and though the proper Subjects of this Kingdom are intelligent, rational, and free Agents, it cannot be supposed God would endow any of his Creatures with such Powers and Faculties, as to put it out of his Power to rule and govern them. This would argue such Ignorance and Weakness, Folly and Imprudence, as can never be supposed to be in God, who knew what he was about, when he made the World, and conferred on his Creatures their several Natures and Properties, and foresaw all the Events and Consequences of their Motions and Actions. And though God was pleased to endow some of his Creatures with free Will and a Liberty of chusing how and in what manner they would act, yet he foresaw what they would do and what would be the Issue and Result of their Election. For whether they act rashly and unadvisedly, or wisely and discreetly, they will at last come to a Resolution, how they will act, and their Actions will be good or  
D evil,



*Serm. H.* evil, as depending on their Choice and Will. But now God by the Power and Excellency of his Prescience foreknows what will be the Motives and Inducements of their Actions, and which way they will at last chuse and determine to act, after the Use and Exercise of their Reason and Understanding and Liberty of Will, which he is pleased to permit them freely to make use of. So that the Foreknowledge of God is not inconsistent with Man's free Will, nor destroys it, as some imagine, but supposes the Use of it, only God foreknows how at last Man will chuse to act, after he hath freely considered and deliberated, and judged, what he is resolved to do.

And though it be above our Understanding and Comprehension, and impossible for us to know the Nature of God's Prescience, and the Manner how he foreknows Things future and contingent, and which depend upon the uncertain Will of free Agents; yet this is no good Argument to prove, that God cannot foresee and foreknow all the future Motions and Actions of his Creatures and the Event of them. For what may be uncertain and contingent in our Apprehension is fixed and certain in the Mind of God; though the Manner and Method of his Under-

Understanding and Foreknowledge is above our Conception. We know not how God exists, how he acts and operates and exerts his natural Powers and Faculties, though we can demonstrate his Existence, and daily feel and enjoy the Benefits and Blessings of his good Providence. And thus the Manner of God's Prescience is above our Comprehension, but we are expressly assured in the Words of Holy Scripture that he foreknows all Things. Thus St *James* in an Assembly of the Apostles and Elders plainly declares, *Known unto God are all his Works from the beginning of the World.* Particularly the Crucifixion of our blessed Saviour is said by St *Peter* to be brought about by the Foreknowledge of God. *Him, being delivered by the determinate Counsel and Foreknowledge of God, they have taken, and by wicked Hands have crucified and slain.* But when we observe and consider, that we know not the Manner of our own Existence, how we live and move and have our Being, what Reason can we have to expect we should be able to comprehend the Mode of God's Existence, or the Manner of the Exertion and Exercise of his infinite Excellencies and Perfections?

Serm. II.

Acts xv.

18.

Acts ii. 23.

Serm. II.

In the Beginning when God first designed and projected the Creation, he foresaw all the Good and Evil that would ever come to pass in the World. But it is the peculiar and transcendent Excellency of God's Wisdom and Counsel to bring Good out of Evil; and to make the wicked Actions of his ungrateful and disobedient Creatures conducive and subservient to the Ends and Purposes of his wise Providence. And this he does by the just and righteous Punishment of wicked Doers, who freely and voluntarily incur his Anger and Vengeance, by abusing their Liberty and Freedom of Will, which he gave them for their Good and Happiness, but which they make the Occasion of their Sin and Misery. And herein is manifested the Righteousness and Justice of God, and an Example given to his obedient Creatures to deter them from all Sin and Impiety. Thus the Devil and his wicked

Jude 6. *Angels, who rebelled against God, and kept not their first Estate, but left their own Habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness, unto the Judgment of the great Day.* But our first Parents, who were deceived and drawn in by the Devil to disobey God, though they suffered for their Disobedience by their introducing

roducing all the Evils and Afflictions Serm. II.  
of Life, and at last Death into the World;  
yet God took Pity and Compassion on  
them, by contriving the Method and  
Means of redeeming and restoring them  
to Happiness and eternal Life through  
the Death and Passion of our Lord and  
Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Fall of *Adam* and the Sins and  
Wickedness of all his Posterity were fore-  
seen and permitted of God from the Be-  
ginning, but at the same time he in-  
tended their Salvation through Christ;  
by whom he made the World, and com-  
mitted into his hands all Power both in  
Heaven and Earth; whom he hath made  
his Vicegerent in his Kingdom of Righ-  
teousness; and *who was manifested that* John iii.  
*he might destroy the Works of the Devil.* <sup>8.</sup>

When therefore the Devil aimed at the  
encreasing and strengthening his King-  
dom of Sin and Impiety by seducing and  
betraying our first Parents into Disobedi-  
ence to their Maker; though God suffer-  
ed him to succeed in his wicked Attempt,  
he pronounced a Curse upon him for it,  
and promised a Deliverance of Mankind  
out his hands by a Prince and Saviour,  
who would baffle and defeat his Assaults  
and at last put an End to his impious  
Reign. But from this first Sin of Man



Serm. II. sprang all the Evil and Wickedness which has ever been in the World, which God is pleased to permit, that Men may experience his Lenity and Kindness, Benevolence and Beneficence to them, notwithstanding all their Offences against him, and that they may have Space and Time to repent of their evil Ways, and return to their Duty, and so become Heirs of God and joint Heirs with Christ in his everlasting Kingdom of Righteousness. Thus God turns the Evil of the World into Good, by taking Occasion from hence to display and illustrate his Patience and Forbearance and Long-suffering towards all Mankind; his Goodness and Mercy to the godly and penitent, and his Justice and Severity against the ungodly and impenitent. And here we may argue in the Words of St Paul,

Rom. ix. *What if God, willing to shew his Wrath, and to make his Power known, endured with long suffering the Vessels of Wrath, fitted to Destruction; that he might make known the Riches of his Glory on the Vessels of Mercy, which he had before prepared unto Glory?*

Prov. xvi. *Thus the Lord hath made all Things for himself: yea, even the Wicked for the Day of Evil.*

But the evil Day which will certainly overtake the Wicked is brought upon them

them by their own wilful Offences and Serm. II. repeated Provocations of God's Anger and Vengeance, who in his righteous Government of the World will not always suffer Sinners to escape unpunished, but will at last vindicate the Righteousness Rom. ii. 6. and Glory of his Kingdom, by rendering to every one according to his Deeds.

The Glory of God may be truly said to be the End of all his Works, and ought to be intended by us in all our Actions. Now God manifests his Glory in exerting and displaying his Divine Excellencies and Perfections, every one of which contribute to the setting forth and Advancement of it; But all God's Attributes are made conspicuous and illustrious by erecting a Kingdom of everlasting Righteousness; most especially all his Moral Perfections are here seen and declared, by the good and gracious, just and wise Administration and Government of all Persons and Things in it. And as God created all Things at first, so he still preserves and governs them; particularly all rational Creatures, who are the proper Subjects of his righteous Kingdom, whom he hath made free Agents, that they might be capable of rendering to him true Allegiance and Obedience: and as the good Angels and blessed Spirits do his Will in

Serm. II. Heaven, so let us make it our Study to do it here on Earth. I shall conclude with a Collect of our Church.

“ O Everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the Services of  
 “ Angels and Men in a wonderful Order; Mercifully grant, that as thy holy  
 “ Angels always do thee Service in Heaven; so by thy Appointment they  
 “ may succour and defend us on Earth,  
 “ through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



28 SE60

SERMON

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## S E R M O N III.

### Of the Wisdom of God in the Redemption of Mankind.

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I C O R. II. 7.

*But we speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery,  
even the hidden Wisdom, which God ordained before the World unto our Glory.*

**W**HAT we are to understand by Serm.III.  
the Words, *The Wisdom of God*  
*in a Mystery* in the former Part  
of the Text, St Paul explains in the latter  
Part of it by these Words, *even the hidden  
Wisdom, which God ordained before the World  
unto our Glory*; which last Words refer to  
the Method God hath been pleased to take  
for the Salvation of Mankind through  
Christ; and import the Wisdom of God  
in the great Work of our Redemption:  
and this Wisdom is said to be in a Mystery,



Serm. III. *ry, and hidden and kept secret, though  
ordained of God before the World unto our  
Glory.*

In discoursing upon the Words of the  
Text, I shall,

I. Consider upon what Account the  
Wisdom of God in our Redemption is  
called a Mystery.

II. I shall observe briefly the original  
State of Man at first, and the Relation  
he bears to God; and the State and Con-  
dition of Mankind, after the Sin of our  
first Parents, as it hath been since found  
by Experience and Matter of Fact, and  
as it is described and represented in Holy  
Scripture.

III. I shall demonstrate the Righteous-  
ness and Wisdom of God in redeeming  
Mankind out of their sinful and misera-  
ble State by the most precious Blood of  
our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I. I shall consider upon what Account  
the Wisdom of God in our Redemption  
is called a Mystery.

The Wisdom of God in our Redemp-  
tion may be said to be a Mystery, as in-  
cluding in it all the sublime Mysteries  
of our most holy Religion, which St  
Paul calls a Mystery of Godliness. Thus,

*And*

*And without Controversy, great is the My-* Serm. III.  
*stery of Godliness, God was manifest in Flesh,* Tim. iii.  
*justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached* 16.  
*unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World,*  
*received up into Glory.*

And this Wisdom may be called likewise a Mystery of Godliness, in Opposition to the hidden Mysteries of the Heathen World, which were so far from being Mysteries of Godliness, that they consisted in the most cruel, inhuman, and unnatural Usages and Practices; such for Instance as the Offering up their Sons and Daughters unto Devils: So gross and absurd was their Idolatry and Superstition, that they worshipped and served the Creature more than the Creator, even dumb senseless Idols of their own making, and revered the most despicable and vilest Animals; and such was their abominable Impurity and Obscenity, that to use the Words of St Paul, *It is a Shame to speak of those Things, which* Eph. v. 12.  
*are done of them in secret.*

Not such are the holy Mysteries of the Christian Religion, which is a Doctrine according to Godliness, both with respect to our Faith and Practice; and therefore a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, briefly comprehended  
in

Serm. III. in these few Words, *that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners.*

But by the Word Mystery in the Text the great Apostle of the Gentiles more especially means the great Mystery of the Vocation of the Gentiles to the Knowledge and Worship of the true God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This we find frequent mention of in several Places of St Paul's other Epistles. Thus particularly in the third Chapter of his Epistle to the *Epheſians* he speaks of his Knowledge in the Mystery of Christ, *which in other Ages was not made known unto the Sons of Men, as it is now revealed unto the Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be Fellow-heirs and of the same Body, and Partakers of his Promise in Christ by the Gospel; whereof I am made a Minister, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable Riches of Christ; and to make all Men see what is the Fellowship of the Mystery, which from the Beginning of the World*

Col. i. 26. *bath been hid in God, even the Mystery which hath been hid from Ages and Generations but now is made manifest to his Saints.* This is that Salvation of which the Prophets and holy Men of old have enquired and searched diligently into. *These are Things, which the Angels desire to look into.* And therefore God ordered Moses to make the Cherubims

1 Peter i.  
10, 12.

bims with their Faces toward the Mercy-seat, and their Wings extended over it, signifying thereby their Willingness and Desire to know the inscrutable Mercy of God, which in the Fulness of Time was to be revealed, and now is made manifest in the Gospel.

Serm. III.  
Exod. xxv.  
20.

But though the Prophets, who prophesied of this Grace, searched what, or what manner of Time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the Sufferings of Christ, and the Glory that should follow; and though neither they nor the Angels in Heaven, who are desirous of prying into these Things, could come to the Knowledge of them, or discover when they were to be revealed and accomplished; yet we read in my Text, *that this hidden Wisdom of God was ordained by him before the World unto our Glory.*

And to this agree many other express Declarations of holy Scripture. Thus St Paul speaks of the Revelation of the Mystery which was kept secret, since the World began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith. Thus again, *To the Intent that now unto the Principalities and Powers in Heaven-*

Rom. xvi.  
25, 26.

Ephes. iii.  
10, 11.

ly



**Serm. III.** *by Places might be known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God, according to the eternal Purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

From whence it plainly appears, that the great Work and Business of Man's Salvation, though unknown to the Patriarchs and Prophets and the holy Angels in Heaven, was consulted and formed from the Beginning in the Mind and Will of God, and intended to be executed in its due and proper Time, according to the Purpose of him, who worketh all Things after the Counsel of his own Will.

**Eph. i. 11.**

And this Counsel of God is a good Argument and Proof, that he does not act arbitrarily or unadvisedly, but that his Will is guided and directed by his Understanding and Wisdom; and that, as he is the most rational Being we can conceive, so the great Rule of all his Actions is the Nature and Reason of Things, which is the general Rule of Action to all reasonable Beings whatever, and the Measure and Standard of all Truth, Righteousness, and Wisdom. And therefore we may be sure, that the great Transaction of Man's Redemption was not lightly and inconsiderately taken in hand; but that as it was pre-determined from the Beginning in the  
divine

divine Mind and Intellect, so it was re- Serm. III.  
solved upon and decreed to be put in  
Execution in the Fulness of Time de-  
liberately and advisedly with the high-  
est Counsel and most consummate Wis-  
dom.

To illustrate this great Truth, and to make it apparent, that we may in some measure see the infinite Wisdom of God in designing and accomplishing our Salvation, is the Business of the ensuing Part of my Discourse upon these Words of my Text, *But we speak the Wisdom God in a Mystery, even the hidden Wisdom, which God ordained before the World unto our Glory.*

Now the Wisdom of any rational and free Agent in any Work and Enterprize is best seen and judged of by observing the End proposed in it, and the Means made use of to attain that End. But Wisdom principally consists in the Choice of the End in any Undertaking. And there may be several Ends intended to be accomplished at the same time in one and the same Enterprize. We weak and finite Creatures, of short and limited Powers and Capacities, must not presume to come to the Knowledge of all the Ends proposed by our infinite and Almighty Creator in any of his Works;  
and

Serm. III. and we naturally can best judge of the  
End of any Thing from its final Cause, unless God is pleased supernaturally to reveal unto us any particular End of his Works. But this God hath been pleased to do in the great Work of our Redemption in several Portions of holy Writ. But I shall confine myself to the Words of my Text, wherein one End is particularly specified, which from the Beginning God was graciously pleased to propose to himself, when he laid the Scheme of our Salvation, and that is our Glory. For St Paul, speaking of the hidden Wisdom of our Redemption, expressly says, *which God ordained before the World unto our Glory.* I shall therefore consider the Wisdom of God in redeeming Man with this View and to this End and Purpose. And that this may more evidently appear I shall now,

II. Observe briefly the Original State of Man at first and the Relation he bears to God; and the State and Condition of Mankind, after the Sin of our first Parents, as it hath been since found by Experience and Matter of Fact, and as it is described and represented in holy Scripture. I shall not mention the several Dignities and Excellencies of human Nature,

Nature, when in the Beginning God Serm. III. created Man, the Remains and Characters of which are still to be found in Man, especially when he righteously and duly exerts and exercises his natural Powers and Faculties, which were originally the Gift of God, and therefore good and excellent in themselves, when they were at first given by him; let me only take Notice in general, that as we owe our Being and all the Endowments and Blessings we have and enjoy to the Goodness and Bounty of our Creator, so ought we to be thankful to him for them, and endeavour to promote his Glory and our own true Happiness in the right Use and Enjoyment of them. But though this is so manifestly our Duty, how indisposed and averse are we to the Performance of it? And this Indisposition is owing, not only to the Frailty and Weakness, the Degeneracy and Depravity of our Nature, but in a great Measure to the Prepossessions and Prejudices, Vanities and Vices, and the Multitude of Temptations we are continually liable and exposed to all our Lives. We come into the World weak and helpless, and imbibe false Notions and Apprehensions of Things in our very Infancy and Childhood; and as we grow up we are

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Serm. III. thoughtless and heedless and inconsiderate; governed more by Sense than Reason, and consult more the Indulgence and Gratification of our carnal Appetites and Desires, than the Improvement of our Mind and Understanding, which requires Labour and Pains, Attention and Study; but we are either so lazy, indolent, and unactive, or so much engaged in Business, or in such hot Pursuit after the Pleasures and Diversions of the World, that we have neither Time, nor Leisure, nor Inclination to consider and think seriously and sedately of Things: Our Lusts and Passions are so strong and vehement, that they overcome our Reason, and they, which ought to be our Servants, become our Lords and Masters. And then after we are thus enslaved to Sin and Wickedness, when we consider the Strength and Power vicious Customs and Habits have over us, it is no Wonder if our whole Lives are generally a Scene of continued Ignorance and Folly, Vice and Vanity. Matter of Fact and Experience for some thousand Years past are too sad a Proof, how Ignorance and Idolatry, Superstition and Impiety, and all Sorts of Vices and Wickedness overspread almost the Face of the whole Earth.

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This all wise Men and Philosophers <sup>Serm. III.</sup> have confessed and complained of in their several Ages and Generations. They were sensible of the Corruption of our Nature, the Disorder and Irregularity, Disturbance and Opposition in our Composition and System, the Conflict between Reason and Sense, the Spirit and the Flesh; though they were ignorant of the Cause and Original of this Depravity and Proneness to Evil, and of its Redress and Cure; but this the holy Scripture has very well accounted for, by tracing it to its Source and Spring, fully describing our Disease and Malady, and directing us to our true and proper Remedy and Recovery.

In the Old Testament we have the History of the Transgression and Apostasy of our first Parents, whence Sin and Misery and Death entred into the World. The Contention and Opposition between our rational and sensitive Faculties, the Weakness and Inability, Corruption and Depravity of our Nature, St Paul very fully and emphatically sets forth in the seventh Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. *I delight, says he, in the Law* Verse 22, *of God, after the inward Man, but I see another Law in my Members warring against the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into* 23, 24.

Serm. III. *Captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in my Members. O wretched Man that I am, who shall deliver me from the Body of this Death! I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

And this Weakness and Corruption of human Nature, which *Adam* derived and transmitted to his Posterity, was greatly encreased and aggravated by their own actual Sins and Wickedness. Infomuch that a little before the Flood *all Fiesh* had corrupted his Way upon Earth, and the Earth was filled with Violence, and the Wickedness of Man was so great, that every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart was only evil continually. And after the Deluge how soon was the World over-run with Ignorance and Vanity, Sin and Impiety; or immersed in the grossest Superstition and vilest Idolatry? Wherefore St Paul saith, God also gave them up to Uncleanness, through the Lusts of their own Hearts, to dishonour their own Bodies between themselves.

Rom. i. 24.

For which reason the same Apostle represents the Condition of the *Ephesians*, as dead in Trespasses and Sins, wherein in time past they had walked according to the Course of this World; having no Hope, and without God in the World.

Eph. ii. 2,  
12.

III. I shall now demonstrate the Righteousness and Wisdom of God in redeeming  
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ing Mankind out of their sinful and miserable State with the most precious Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Serm. III.

As at the first in the original Formation of Man we may observe a Consultation in the Godhead about it, for thus the Words run, *Let us make Man in our Image*; So was the great Work of our Salvation resolved and agreed upon between the Father and his Son, and undertaken and conducted by them with the highest Wisdom and Prudence. For it became God, as a Being of infinite Purity and Holiness, Justice and Righteousness, to consult the Honour and Dignity of those peculiar Attributes, and to derogate nothing from their Excellency. And therefore he would not pardon Man's Transgression without public Satisfaction, and Amends made for the Indignity and Injury done to his divine Majesty by the Contempt of his righteous Government, and Disobedience to his express Command. Gen. i. 26.

But this Satisfaction *Adam* does not presume to make for his Transgression. And therefore God in his supreme Wisdom took the Matter into his own Hand, and formed the Method of our Redemption through the Merits and Mediation of his most dearly beloved Son.



Serm. III. And to vindicate the perfect Purity and Righteousness of his Father God the Son was pleased to assume our Nature, and suffer the utmost Cruelties for our Sin, that by the Dignity of his Person and Merit of his Obedience and Sufferings, a full Compensation might be made to God's Righteousness and Holiness; and thereby a Way laid open for the Exercise and Display of his infinite Goodness and Mercy in the Accomplishment of our Redemption. And out of Love to Mankind God was pleased to permit his only begotten Son voluntarily to undertake this great Work and Labour of Love, and in the Fulness of Time sent him into the World to accomplish it. This is according to the Account of the Matter, which St *John* gives us in his Gospel.

John iii. *God so loved the World that he gave his only*  
 16, 17. *begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting Life. For God sent not his Son into the World to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be saved.*

Now the Wisdom of this Method which God was pleased to take to save Mankind is most evident in these two Respects.

1. As Righteousness and Holiness and Purity are the most glorious Excellencies and Perfections of the Divine Nature, and

and add a Beauty and Lustre to all the other Attributes of God; so in the first place he took care, that the highest Regard and Reverence should be paid to these Perfections: and therefore he suffered his best beloved Son, *the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person,* Heb.i.3. *Serm. III.* to undergo the sorest Afflictions for the Punishment of our Sins, in Honour and Vindication of the Rectitude of his Nature and of his most righteous Government of the World, and to assert and maintain the supreme Authority and Sacredness of his Laws.

2. *As God is of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and cannot look on Iniquity;* so when he determined to save Man and to remit the Punishment due to his Sin, he took such a Method of doing this, as to demonstrate his great Love to him, when he would with such an inestimable Price as the Sacrifice of his only Son purchase his Redemption; and yet at the same time, that Man might have no Encouragement from this Love to continue in Sin, God laid before him the Odiousness of Sin, and its dire Consequences in the sad Sufferings of his Saviour to deter him from it for the future, and to make him sensible of the dreadful Punishment

Serm. III. he himself must expect, if he would not be prevailed upon to forsake it.

And from hence we may see the Reason, why such an amazing Atonement and Propitiation for Man's Sin was judged proper and requisite in the Fore-knowledge and Counsel of God, as the Death of his only Son: which was, that by the Dignity and Excellence of Christ's Person, and the Merit of his Obedience, and the Ignominy and Acerbity of his Sufferings in our Nature and in our Stead, it might appear to all the World, both Angels and Men, how offensive and abominable Sin was in God's Sight, how opposite and repugnant to his most pure and holy Nature, how destructive of his righteous Government and Sovereignty over his Creatures, and what Disorder and Confusion, Destruction and Misery were the certain Consequences of it.

That Sin might appear the more exceeding sinful, as directly opposite to a plain Command, and in open Defiance of its express Sanction, which was certain Death, God the Father permitted his beloved Son to undergo the cruellest Pains in behalf of fallen Man, that no Blemish might be cast upon the perfect Purity and Righteousness of his Nature, and the Wisdom and Justice of his Government

vernment by shewing Mercy to his sinful and miserable Creature; and our blessed Saviour condescended to leave the Bosom of his Father, and to become Man, that by the public Sacrifice of himself for our Sin, a full, perfect, and sufficient Satisfaction and Atonement might be made unto God.

That the most exact Obedience is due to God's Government and Laws from his Creatures must be acknowledged, as it is founded in the highest Reason and Nature of Things; and that all Disobedience is a most heinous Crime is very evident, when we consider the supreme Excellency and Majesty of God, and the extreme Baseness and Ingratitude of the Sinner, whom God raised out of nothing, and gave him his Being with all its Benefits and Blessings. This infinite Distance and Disproportion between the Creator and the Creature is so high an Aggravation of all Sin, that no less a Person than the Son of God submitted to suffer for the Baseness and Indignity of it.

And what Counsel and Wisdom of God may we now perceive and admire in this Dispensation and Oeconomy of Man's Salvation? What Love and Kindness of God to Man was this, after such a wonderful Manner to devise and form the Plan



Serm. III. Plan of his Redemption, and what astonishing Condescension and Abasement was it in our Lord, to leave the Mansions of eternal Bliss, and to live here on Earth a miserable Life, and at last to suffer a most ignominious and painful Death upon the Cross that he might fully accomplish it? *Herein is Love, saith St John, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.*

1 Epist.  
iv. 10.

God grant that we may all be so sensible of this his Love to us, and so diligently study to please him, and so carefully live in his Fear, that we may die in his Favour and fail not finally to obtain everlasting Felicity, through the Merits and Mediation of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ; to whom, &c.

28 SE60



SERMON

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## S E R M O N    I V .

Of the Glory of God.

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### P S A L M   V I I I .   I .

*O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the Earth! Who hast set thy Glory above the Heavens. Or, according to our old Translation, O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy Name in all the Earth! Thou that hast set thy Glory above the Heavens.*

**I**N this Psalm God's excellent Name Serm. IV.  
in all the World is extolled and magnified, and his Glory raised and advanced above the Heavens, both upon the Account of the infinite Perfections of his divine Nature, considered absolutely in themselves, and upon the Account of the Manifestation and Display of his most glorious Attributes, considered relatively

Serm. IV. ly and with respect to his Creatures; and  
 to Mankind more especially, to whom he  
 he hath been peculiarly kind and benefi-  
 cent.

The absolute Perfections of God are implied in the first Words of my Text, *O Lord*, which in the Original Hebrew is *Jehovah*, under which Character the essential Excellencies and Perfections of God are signified, whereby he is most glorious and illustrious in himself, in his own Nature and divine Properties. The following Words *our Lord*, or *our Governor*, denote the supreme Excellency and Majesty of God, with regard to his Dominion and Rule over us, and his Providence in general over all the World. By *his Name* we are to understand God himself, his Nature and Attributes; and by *his Glory* is to be understood the Discovery and Manifestation of his Perfections and Properties, and by Consequence the Praise and Acknowledgement and Adoration justly due to them.

Thus when *Moses* beseeched God to shew him his Glory, God said, *I will make all my Goodness to pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of the Lord before thee, and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew Mercy on whom I will shew Mercy.* Or, as when the Lord stood with *Moses* on Mount Sinai,

Exod.  
xxiii. 18,  
19.

Sinai, and proclaimed his Name, *The Lord, The Lord, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in Goodness and Truth.* Serm. IV.  
Exod. xxxiv. 6.

In the Text God's excellent Glory and Majesty is set forth, as the great Creator and Governor of the World. And therefore the Subject of my following Discourse upon the Words shall be,

I. The Discovery and Manifestation of God's Excellence and Glory in the Creation of this visible World.

II. The Proof and Evidence of God's Excellence and Glory in his Providence over the World, and in his Administration and Government of all Things therein.

I. I shall Discourse of the Discovery and Manifestation of God's Excellence and Glory in the Creation of this visible World.

In the first Chapter of the Book of *Genesis* we have a particular Account of God's Creation of the World, and its several Parts, both animate and inanimate, rational and irrational. And in the Conclusion of that Chapter, after God had viewed every Thing that he had made, he was pleased to declare his  
Satis-



Serm. IV. Satisfaction and Acquiescence in all that  
 he had done, which we read in these

Verse 31. Words, *And God saw every Thing that he  
 had made, and behold it was very good.*

Gen. i. 2. *Thus after the Heavens and the Earth were  
 finished, and all the Host of them, upon a  
 particular Review and Survey of every  
 Thing God pronounces his Complacency  
 in all his Works, as conformable to the  
 Idea and Model which he had of them  
 in his infinite Mind and Intellect when  
 he created them, and as answering the  
 Design and End he proposed to himself  
 in their Formation, according to the  
 Place and Dignity, Rank and Station in  
 the World, which he thought fit and  
 proper severally to assign to each of  
 them.*

But though every Thing God had  
 made was very good in its Kind and Na-  
 ture ; yet were the Creatures of various  
 Kinds and of different Natures, and ac-  
 cordingly more or less excellent, some  
 than others. Thus bare Matter is below  
 Matter put into Motion, and Matter in  
 Motion is inferior to Vegetables, and  
 Vegetables to Animals, and Animals en-  
 dued only with Sense, to others endued  
 with Sense and Reason ; and among ra-  
 tional Beings there are several Degrees  
 and Orders of them, some superior to  
 others,

others, till we come to the supreme rational Being of All. Serm. IV.

Now every Being hath its peculiar Nature and Properties, whereby it is known and distinguished from all other Kinds of Being, and according to its Nature is better, or less good, more or less excellent than others. Nothing, that God made was Bad or Evil, when it first came out of his Hands; though some Things were made better and more excellent than others.

If we view and consider the several Parts of the Creation in themselves, absolutely, and without respect to one another, they are all of them very good in themselves, according to their several Kinds and Natures; but if we compare their several Properties and Qualities together, we shall find them various and different, some of a higher Kind and Degree than others, but all of them in their several Proportions according to their respective Virtues and Qualities, uniting and conspiring together to declare and set forth the Glory and Excellence of God, their Creator. Thus King *David*, in the Psalm from whence I have taken my Text, celebrates the Praise and Glory of God in the Formation of Man in particular. *When I consider*, says he,

Serm. IV. *he, thy Heavens, the Work of thy Fingers, the Moon and the Stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is Man that thou art mindful of him? And the Son of Man, that thou vifitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the Angels, and hast crowned him with Glory and Honour, &c.*

But though Man be the most noble and excellent Creature in this visible World; yet we must take Notice, that while the Psalmist is admiring and extolling the Dignity of Man, he acknowledges, that he is made a little lower than the Angels: And of the Angels we read in Scripture several Orders and Degrees, which consequently are some superior and more glorious than others. But the Difference and Distance, Disparity and Inequality between the highest Angel and the supreme Being is immense and infinite, and above all Comparison and Proportion, as every Creature must be infinitely below its Creator.

But as every Creature in its proper Measure and Proportion contributes to the Advancement of the Glory and Majesty of God the great Creator of all Things; so the more excellent the Creature is, the greater Honour and Praise it reflects upon its Creator; and consequently by the Angels and Arch-Angels  
and

and all the Company of Heaven God's <sup>Serm. IV.</sup> Name is more glorified and magnified in their Formation, than by any or all the Creatures here on Earth.

From the Multitude and Variety of Creatures here below of different Species, and endowed with their several Powers and Faculties, Properties and Qualities, we justly infer the Glory and Excellence of God. For in the Words of St Paul, *the invisible Things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* Rom. i. 20.

But we may reasonably suppose, there may be a great many other Worlds, besides this visible one, which we behold with Wonder and Admiration, each of which may be inhabited with Creatures of several Sorts and Kinds, having Natures and Constitutions suitable and adapted to their peculiar Seats and Mansions: And in some of them there may be many Creatures, as much superior and more excellent than ourselves, as we surpass in Dignity of Nature the lowest Creatures here on Earth.

Thus we read in Scripture of thousands and ten thousands of Angels and Spirits, of which there may be many Orders and Degrees above one another, every one

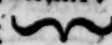


Serm. IV. of them reasonable Creatures, and all  
 of them far exceeding us in the Powers  
 and Capacities of their Nature.

In like manner it is agreeable to our  
 best and most approved modern Philo-  
 sophy to think the fixt Stars to be so  
 many several Suns, with Planets revolv-  
 ing round them, as in our Solar System;  
 So that it is not improbable, there may  
 be as many Worlds, like Ours as we see  
 fixt Stars; and each World stockt with  
 Creatures, endued with Qualities and  
 Properties suitable and adapted and agree-  
 able to their several distinct Places and  
 Habitations.

Now the proper Inference and Con-  
 clusion from all this is to entertain the  
 highest Thoughts and Conceptions of  
 the great Creator of every Thing; to  
 extol, admire, and adore his most ex-  
 cellent Dignity and Majesty; and as holy  
 Psal. xxix. *David exhorteth, To give unto the Lord the*  
 3. *Glory due unto his Name.*

And as these large and extensive  
 Thoughts of God's Creation tend to the  
 Advancement and Exaltation of his Ex-  
 cellency and Glory; so ought they to be-  
 get in us humble and low Thoughts and  
 Opinions of ourselves, and to put us in  
 mind, that though we be the principal  
 Inhabitants of this Earth, and God hath  
 made

made us to have Dominion over the Works Serm. IV.  
of his Hands here in this World; yet   
are there Multitudes of Creatures in other  
Places, much superior to ourselves, with  
whom when we compare ourselves, we  
cannot but cry out with the Psalmist,  
*Lord what is Man, that thou art mindful of  
him? and the Son of Man, that thou visitest  
him?*

And when all God's Creatures, who  
do not wilfully by their Disobedience  
and Rebellion forfeit his Favour and  
Kindness to them, have a proportion-  
able Share in his Care and Love, let us  
not believe ourselves the only or chief  
Objects of his Regard; for there may  
be many Worlds of Creatures much  
more deserving his Goodness and loving  
Kindness than ourselves.

And this should teach us how to regu-  
late our Apprehensions and Judgments,  
when we presume to enquire into God's  
Ways and Works, and perhaps censure  
his Dealing with the Sons of Men, and  
even question the Righteousness and E-  
quity of his Proceedings, who is the su-  
preme Lord and King of the Universe,  
which he hath formed out of Nothing,  
and therefore can have no Dislike, no  
Prejudice nor Partiality, no Disaffection  
nor Ill-will to any of his Creatures. And

Serm. IV. so we should judge ourselves, were we capable of forming a right Judgment, or could we comprehend the whole of the Matter.

But now every individual Creature throughout the Universe, according to its peculiar Nature and Properties, considered distinctly and absolutely in itself, is an Argument and Proof in some measure of God's Glory and Excellence; and the superior the Virtue and Qualities of the Creatures are, so much higher do they argue the Excellence and Perfection of their Creator to be; though the whole Universe cannot fully and worthily shew forth all his Glory and Praise.

For no Creature can be endowed with any Property or Virtue, which it did not receive from its Creator, or which did not at first and originally spring and derive from him; and consequently all the Accomplishments and Endowments of every Creature in this visible World, and of all that may be in numberless invisible Worlds, must be possessed and enjoyed by the great Creator of all, either in the same Kind, but in an infinitely higher Degree; or of a different Kind, but in a much more perfect Manner. For we are expressly assured by St James, *that every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from*

*from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights, with whom is no Variableness neither Shadow of Turning.*

Serm. IV.

Jam. i. 17.

But let us not imagine, that all the Gifts and Virtues, all the Beauties and Ornaments scattered and dispersed throughout the Universe can give us a full and adequate Idea of God's supreme Excellence: For when we have raised and stretched our Thoughts and Imaginations to their utmost Extent and Compass, and would form a Notion and Conception of the highest Excellence, God's Excellence is still higher and higher, and infinitely above all that we are able to imagine or conceive.

Thus every Creature, taken singly by itself, according to its true and proper Nature, discovers the Excellence of the Creator. But if we consider severally the constituent Parts of any individual Creature with respect to the whole Compound, we shall find, besides their absolute Goodness, Form, and Beauty in themselves, a very wise and curious Structure and Contrivance in them, which plainly indicates and points out the original Design and Intention of God in their Formation, by fitting and adapting them to their peculiar Ends and Purposes, and making them all useful



Serm. IV. and subservient to the Good and Benefit of each Creature. And herein appears the Knowledge and Wisdom of the Creator, both in forming with great Nicety and Exactness every Part and Member of his Creatures for the Use it was at first designed to be put to, and in joining and adjusting all their Parts together, so as to agree and unite in the regular and uniform Shape and Constitution of each Creature, according to its proper and peculiar Kind and Nature.

But more illustriously *the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handy-Work. In them hath he set a Tabernacle for the Sun; which is as a Bridegroom coming out of his Chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong Man to run a Race.* When we view and contemplate the Order and Regularity, the Stateliness and Magnificence, the Symmetry and Proportion, Harmony and Beauty of this visible World; the constant Succession of Day and Night, Summer and Winter; when we behold the Sun, Moon and Stars, all moving in their several Orbits, and at fixt and certain Periods of Time finishing their Courses; more particularly when we turn our Eyes upon this our Earth, and take Notice of the Multitude of its Inhabitants, and of its various Productions of all Sorts, what an Idea

Idea must we conceive of the Glory and Excellence of our Almighty Creator? Serm. IV.

Who can sufficiently admire the Works of his Hands, or duly set forth all his Praise? But if we consider the Formation of Man and all the Ornaments and Accomplishments of his outward Shape and Form, and more especially the internal Powers and Faculties of his Mind, with his free Will and Liberty of Action, they are the most surprising and amazing; as he is the Top and Perfection of this visible Creation; the Image and Likeness of God himself, his true Resemblance in Righteousness and Holiness, and consequently affords an undeniable Argument of the Rectitude of the Divine Nature, which is the supreme Excellence and Glory of the Deity. But this brings me to consider,

II. The Proof and Evidence of God's Excellence and Glory in his Providence over the World, and in his Administration and Government of all Things therein.

We took Notice, in the Beginning of this Discourse, that after God had finished the Creation of the World, *he saw every Thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.* Gen. i. 31. In which Words is impli-

Serm. IV. ed not only God's Approbation of all his  
 Works, as good and excellent in them-  
 selves, and useful and serviceable to one  
 another; But also his Complacency and  
 Satisfaction in them, as they were all  
 agreeable and exactly according to his  
 Will and Intention in their Formation.  
 For as God created all Things, so for his Plea-  
 sure they are, and were created. And as by  
 his Word alone, by his Almighty Fiat all  
 Things sprung up into Being out of No-  
 thing; so by his Will and good Plea-  
 sure do they still subsist and continue  
 in Being; and were he otherwise pleas-  
 ed, or unwilling they should continue  
 in Being any longer, they would imme-  
 diately vanish and sink into their pri-  
 mitive Nothing. St Paul is very full  
 and expresse in this Matter; For by him,  
 says the Apostle, were all Things created,  
 that are in Heaven, and that are in Earth,  
 visible and invisible; whether they be Thrones  
 or Dominions or Principalities or Powers:  
 all Things were created by him, and for him.  
 And he is before all Things, and by him all  
 Things consist. Or, as we read in other  
 Words of the same Apostle, he upholdeth all  
 Things by the Word of his Power.

Thus in general all Things depend  
 upon God; and not only derived their  
 Being from him at their Creation, but  
 by

by his universal Concurrence and Co-<sup>Serm. IV.</sup> operation they are preserved and continued in Being; every Creature actually existing according to its Nature, and exerting its natural Powers and Faculties; which God enables and strengthens them all to do by his gracious Influence, Assistance, and Blessing. So that God not only permits the World to be as it is, but supports and upholds it in Being, continually *working all Things in it, after the* Eph. i 11. *Counsel of his own Will.*

And therefore we make our Addresses to God as the Creator and Preserver of all Mankind, acknowledging with St Paul, *that in him we live, and move, and* Acts xvii. 28. *have our Being.*

Nor does God only preserve us in Being, but takes Care of us and provides for us all Things necessary and convenient, by doing Good, and *giving us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling* Acts xiv. 17. *our Hearts with Food and Gladness.*

And herein we may see the Excellency of God's Providence over the World in general, by making such ample and abundant Provision for the Subsistence and Support, Welfare and Happiness of the great Multitude and vast Variety of Creatures in it, according to their several different Kinds and Natures.

But



Serm. IV.

But the Excellency of the divine Providence in preserving and sustaining the different Species of Creatures, and every Individual of each Species in the World, is evident and conspicuous in God's wise and prudent Way and Manner of contriving and working this, not only by plentifully providing fit and proper Food and Nutriment for their Support and Sustenance; but by making the Creatures themselves useful and beneficial to one another, and by planting in the Nature of some of them such Instincts and Appetites, such Affections and Desires, as strongly incite and incline them to associate and to live together, and to be mutually aiding and assisting in each other's Happiness. For as from the certain and constant Form and Make of the several Parts of the Bodies of Animals their Use and Design may be plainly discovered and known, so from their natural Powers and Faculties, Propensions and Inclinations, Dispositions and Affections, may be concluded what Sort of Life they were originally designed for, and what their several Duties and Offices, Employments and Business ought to be.

And from the final Causes of all Things in general a very good Argument may be deduced in Proof of God's  
tran-

transcendent Excellence in Knowledge Serm. IV.  
and Wisdom, Power and Goodness, by  
forming and disposing every Thing with  
such admirable Counsel and Design. Par-  
ticularly from the Frame and Constitu-  
tion of Man, his Desires, Affections and  
Appetites, his Moral Sense of Good and  
Evil, and the Notion and Apprehension  
he naturally entertains of God and Re-  
ligion, by reasoning and reflecting upon  
the Phænomena of the World, it plainly  
appears, that we were formed for Society  
and for the mutual Good of one ano-  
ther, and to be religiously given in Acts  
of Piety and Devotion; to be Promoters  
and Publishers of God's great and glori-  
ous Name throughout the World, that  
*Men may talk of all his wondrous Works, and  
sing of his Righteousness.*

From this Consideration of God's Inten-  
tion and Design, when he at first created  
Man, and endued him with such an ex-  
cellent Nature, which though by Sin im-  
paired and blemished, yet God is pleased  
still to preserve it in its essential Powers  
and Faculties; from reflecting upon the  
End of our Creator, plainly discovered  
and revealed in the peculiar Gifts and  
Endowments we are possessed of and en-  
joy, it is manifest, God designed Man to  
be a sociable Creature, and consequently  
that

*Serm. IV.* that Society and Government among Men derive their Original from divine Institution. Therefore great States and Kingdoms are under God's peculiar Care and Inspection, and they are observed to flourish or decline according to the Virtues or Vices generally practised by them. For God naturally loves Righteousness and hates Iniquity, and will certainly reward the one and punish the other, either in this World, or in the next. But the Kingdoms of this World will cease and be dissolved in the next, and therefore they must stand or fall here according to the Iniquity or Righteousness of them.

God will not suffer wicked Men to combine in Societies and Communities, and erect Kingdoms and Empires, that they may be the better able to execute their ambitious and unjust Counsels and Enterprises in the Ruin and Destruction of other People; which is directly contrary to the End and Design of his wise Institution of Government; but will confound their Devices, blast their Confederacies, and destroy and bring to nothing their Power and Authority and Rule: and though sometimes he permits wicked Nations to plague one another by Way of Punishment for their Sins; yet in Vindication of God's Honour and Justice

justice and the Sacredness of Government, *Serm. IV.*  
he will not suffer a wicked Nation to be long triumphant.

Without Government the World cannot long subsist, and therefore God will not see the Abuse of it to prevail so far as to subvert the Foundations of it, and therefore to prevent Anarchy and Confusion he will interpose in the Support and Establishment of a just and wise Administration and in the Ruin and Subversion of a wicked and foolish one. The Reason and End of all Rule and Government is the Good and Benefit of Mankind, which requires the Abolition of Kingdoms and Empires, when they encourage Impiety and Vice, Rapine and Violence, and are the Causes of Wars and Bloodshed and Desolation throughout the World. But Rulers are God's Ministers to us for Good, and are not a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil.

And from hence it necessarily follows, that every Soul ought to be subject to the higher Powers, as ordained of God, to live quiet and peaceable Lives in their several Stations and Callings; and to behave and conform themselves in all their Intercourse and Transactions with one another, honestly and justly, friendly  
and



Serm. IV. and respectfully, according to their different Qualities, Relations and Dependencies.

But Man alone in this visible World is made capable of conceiving any Notion of a Deity, and of rendering to him due Honour and Worship; and therefore it is evident God intended he should live not only in civil, but more especially in religious Society and Community, according to the peculiar Dignity, Superiority and Excellence of his Nature.

And therefore we may conclude, that it was God's first and principal Intention in the Creation of Mankind to form a Society of Religious Creatures here on Earth, and to erect a Kingdom of Saints and Servants, who should all unanimously and with one Accord agree and consent to serve and obey him, by offering up their Prayers and Praises, Thanksgivings and Blessings for all his Benefits and Mercies continually bestowed upon them.

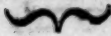
This Society or Kingdom of God's faithful People on Earth, we find mentioned and described by St Peter in these  
 1 Pet. ii. 9. *Words; Ye are a chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood, a peculiar People, that ye should shew forth the Praises of him, who hath call-*  
 ed

ed you out of Darknes into his marvellous Light. *Serm. IV.*

And thus God commands Moses to tell the Children of Israel, Now therefore, if *Exod. xix.* ye will obey my Voice indeed and keep my Covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar Treasure unto me above all People: For all the Earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a Kingdom of Priests, and an holy Nation. *5. 6.*

This Kingdom of God's People is now but in its Beginning and Infancy, striving and contending and militant here on Earth with the Devil and the Powers of Darknes, tho' the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against it; But in its full Growth and Increase it shall be glorious and triumphant in Heaven, when all Enemies shall be subdued and put under Christ's Feet: Then shall our weak and imperfect Virtues and Graces be consummated and crowned in God's everlasting Kingdom with infinite Blifs and Glory.

Now the Excellency of this Kingdom consists in the perfect Righteousness and Equity of its Laws and Ordinances, and in the willing and ready Submission and Obedience of its People. As God Almighty is the great King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the supreme Governor as well as Maker of all Things, whose Nature and Property it is ever  
to

Serm. IV.  to love Righteousness and hate Iniquity, and whose Glory and Excellence principally derive from the Purity and Holiness of his Nature: so we may be sure, nothing can be pleasing and agreeable to him, nothing lovely in his Sight, but what is righteous and holy, just and good.

And consequently, all his Commandments must be most reasonable, his Precepts equitable, and his whole Government wise and just; or, as King David expresses it, *The Lord is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works.*

Psal. cxlv.  
17.

And as the whole Creation is the Work of his Hands, and we are all his People and the Sheep of his Pasture, what can be more just and reasonable, than that we and all his Creatures should submit to his Laws, and readily and chearfully obey his Will?

And the whole visible Creation, except ourselves; do constantly and regularly by their several Motions and Actions execute his Pleasure and perform his Will. And what a Reproach and Disgrace is it to us to be the only Creatures visible on Earth, that break his Laws, despise his Government, and disobey his most sacred Will? O, how unworthy, base, and ungrateful is it, that we, who are the  
most

most favoured of God's Creatures here *Serm. IV.*  
on Earth, on whom he hath conferred  
the highest and noblest Gifts, should be  
the most ungrateful for them. That  
we should pervert and abuse them to  
God's Dishonour, and our own Ruin!  
Is it thus we requite the Lord for all the  
Benefits he hath conferred upon us? O  
foolish and unwise!

It is true, that among all the other un-  
valuable Endowments and Accomplish-  
ments, Privileges and Prerogatives of our  
Nature, God hath been pleased to grant  
us one Power, our Liberty of Will and  
Freedom of Action, upon which chiefly  
depends all the Virtue and Moral Good-  
ness of our Actions. For by our Free-  
will we have a Power to chuse the Evil or  
the Good, and according to our Choice  
our Actions are of either Denomination,  
and by Consequence our other Faculties  
become either useful and beneficial, or  
hurtful and mischievous to us, and really  
contribute either to our Happiness or  
Misery. Of such Importance it is, that  
we make a right Use of this most excel-  
lent Gift, our Liberty and Power of de-  
termining our own Actions.

But whatever Mischief or Misery we  
may bring on ourselves by the ill Use of  
our Free-Will, as the best Things in  
G the



Serm. IV.  the World may be perverted and corrupted, and the better they are, so much the worse the Corruption and Abuse; whatever Evil and Unhappiness may from hence arise, God is by no means to be charged as the Author of it, but we ourselves, who wilfully pull down Ruin and Destruction upon our own Heads.

It was great Goodness and Kindness and a singular Favour in God to endow us only among all the Creatures in this visible World with such an excellent Power and Faculty, as the Freedom of our Will and the Liberty of chusing and determining our own Actions; which Power we may daily and hourly experience within ourselves, if we will but observe and attend to it. For what can be plainer and more obvious to any one's Observation, than that we can move out of our Place or continue in it, as we will; than that we can act, or not act, after such a Manner, according to the Dictates and Suggestions of our Minds and Consciences, or contrariwise, as we please and voluntarily chuse to act? So that it is very wonderful, that there ever should have been any Dispute about the Truth of this Matter.

And indeed it is equally strange, that Men should be so unmindful of blessing

sing and praising God for this inestimable Benefit; that instead of freely and voluntarily worshipping and obeying him, as they know in Conscience they ought to do, and as becomes Creatures, and Servants, and Subjects of so bountiful a Creator, so good a Master, and so gracious a King, they should use their Liberty to dishonour their Maker, affront their Lord and Master, and to rebel against their King.

God's original Design in bestowing on Man this most excellent Gift, was that Man might render unto God a free-will Offering of Praise and Thanksgiving, and worship the Lord with an holy Worship, in Sincerity, in Spirit and in Truth; that we might serve and obey God freely and out of Choice, and not as other Creatures do, by Force and Compulsion and Necessity of Nature.

Though the whole World be the Lord's and all that dwell therein, and are all subservient to his Will and Pleasure; yet Man alone is made capable of rendering to him a voluntary and reasonable Service, by which he becomes truly and properly a Subject of God's Kingdom here on Earth. And as God himself is infinitely the most incomparable and excellent Being, the more excel-

Serm. IV.

lent his Subjects are, so much the more glorious is his Kingdom. For what Majesty or Glory is it to regulate and dispose in order Stocks and Stones, or to animate and enliven Vegetable and Brute Creatures, in Comparison of ruling and governing by the most righteous Laws rational and free Agents, whose Service and Obedience is spontaneous and voluntary, upon a Principle of Knowledge and Reason, Ingenuity, Duty and Gratitude? And therefore by how much the more excellent the Creatures are, by so much the more excellent must the Creator be; and by so much the more excellent must God's Government of his Creatures be; and by Consequence so much the more glorious his Kingdom. Which that we may all inherit, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, &c. *Amen.*

28 SE60



SERMON

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## S E R M O N V.

### Of the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation.

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E P H E S I A N S I. 17. I I

*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of him.*

**T**HE great Apostle St Paul makes Serm. V.  
these Words to be a Request to  
God in his Prayers for the *Ephesians*, after he heard of their Faith in the Lord Jesus, and Love unto all the Saints; ceasing not to give Thanks for them, making mention of them in his Prayers, *That the God of, &c.* as we read in the Context, verse 15, 16, 17. I shall consider only the latter Part of the Text,



Serm. V. contained in these Words, *May give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation, in the Knowledge of him.* And,

I. I shall enquire what we are to understand by *the Spirit of Wisdom.*

II. Examine into the Meaning of the Words, *Spirit of Revelation*; and,

III. I will endeavour to explain the Sense of the Expression, *in the Knowledge of him*; Or, as the original Words will bear, *for the Acknowledgment of him.*

I. I will enquire what we are to understand by *the Spirit of Wisdom.* By the Word Spirit, according to an usual Phrase, or Manner of Speech, called in Rhetorick a Metonymy, when by the Cause the Effects of that Cause are signified, in Scripture by the Word Spirit, are often denoted the Effects and Operations of the Spirit; and these Operations of the Spirit are usually distinguished into the Gifts and Graces of God's Spirit, or the Holy Ghost, the third Person in the ever blessed Trinity.

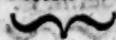
By the Gifts of the Spirit, are commonly understood the natural Endowments, Abilities, and Qualifications of Persons, whereby they are enabled to execute or perform any Office or Work. By the Graces

Graces of the Spirit, are generally signified Moral Virtues, specified and distinguished under different Names, according to their particular Qualities, Relations, and Properties: and these Graces are sometimes called *the Fruits of the Spirit*, which are the same also as Moral Virtues.

1. As to the Gifts of the Spirit; let it be considered, that the Concourse and Co-operation of God is requisite and necessary to enable us to perform the most common and ordinary Functions and Offices of Life. *For in him we live,* Acts xvii. 28. *and move, and have our Being,* according to the plain and express Words of St Paul. So that without the divine Aid and Assistance we are not able to exert and exercise our several natural Powers and Faculties; and consequently unable to move or act, much more to execute any Office, acquire any Art or Science, or accomplish any Business or Undertaking.

This is the common and ordinary Concurrence of God with all his Creatures, who by their very Nature and Condition and Law of their Being, are dependent and rely upon his Favour and Goodness, and subsist solely by the Communications of his Benefits and Blessings.

Serm. V.



But there is a more especial and singular Care and Concern for Men; and for good Men and true Christians more particularly; which in holy Scripture is frequently called God's Love towards them, as the peculiar Objects of the divine Favour and Kindness, whereby they live more peculiarly under the Care and Protection of God's Providence; are guided and directed by his holy Spirit, assisted by his Grace, and prospered by his Benediction.

It is this Spirit, which influences and animates the Lives and Actions of all good Men, which helps them to will and to do, and puts into their Minds holy Desires, and assists them to bring the same to good Effect, and in a word sanctifies all their natural Abilities, Powers and Faculties, directs all their Operations to a right End, and makes them intend the Honour and Glory of God, as the supreme and ultimate End of all they do; and this in a constant, steady, and uniform Practice of all Truth and Righteousness.

And therefore whatever natural Endowments, Excellencies, or Perfections, of Body or Mind, Men may have, they are all originally the Gift of God, *who is the Giver of every good and perfect Gift*: and what-

whatever Improvements and Advancements they may make in Arts and Sciences whatever Acquisitions they may possess and enjoy, it is by the Assistance of God's Spirit they have attained to them, and by his Influence, Instigation and Direction they make a right Use and Application of them; which is the true Notion and Definition of Wisdom. And it is this Spirit of Wisdom, which the Apostle prays may be given to the *Ephesians*, to guide and conduct them in the Paths of Holiness and Righteousness, and in the Practice of all true Piety. But this brings me,

2. To consider wherein the Graces of God's holy Spirit do consist. The Graces of the divine Spirit are the true and genuine Fruits and Effects of it; and these appear in our Lives and Conversations, and are what we call Moral Virtues, as is very plain and evident from these Words of St Paul. *But the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance:* And those in his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, v. 9. *For the Fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodness and Righteousness and Truth.* Serm. V.  
Gal. v. 22, 23.

The great End of all our Actions ought to be the Glory of God, which is best con-



Serm. V.

consulted and promoted by the Practice of all true Religion, in Obedience to his Will, and from a Principle of Love to God, as the original Spring and Fountain of all Goodness, the great Patron and Lover of all Truth and Righteousness. And when out of Love and Obedience to God we direct and govern all our Actions, with regard to their several Circumstances, according to the true Nature and Reason of Things, to the best of our Knowledge and Judgment, our short and imperfect Performances will become Moral Virtues, and Christian Graces, through Faith in Christ, who alone can reconcile our sinful Persons, and render our sincere Endeavours acceptable to God.

But this Disposition and Desire to please God, this Turn and Temper of our Minds to love and practice all Virtue and Goodness, proceeds from the Operation of God's Spirit upon our Hearts and Minds, who not only prevents and keeps us in our Doings; and inspires into us good Thoughts and Desires; but excites and stirs us up to good Actions, aiding and assisting our weak Endeavours, and furthering us by his continual Help, that in all our Thoughts, Words, and Works we may seek the Glory of his holy Name, and finally by his infinite Mercy through Christ

Christ obtain everlasting Life. This naturally leads me to the Consideration of my second general Head, which was, Serm. V.

II. To examine into the Meaning of the Words, *Spirit of Revelation.*

As by the Spirit of Wisdom was signified the Knowledge and Practical Use and Application of natural Truths; so by the Spirit of Revelation is to be understood the Discovery and Knowledge of supernatural Truths; with the Use and Benefit of them to the Christian Church: The former we attain to the Knowledge of by the common and ordinary Means of Instruction and Study, with the general Assistance of God's Spirit, and his Blessing upon our Endeavours; the latter are revealed and in express Words of holy Scripture plainly declared to us; God by the Influence of his Spirit testifying in our Hearts the sure Belief of them: without which Revelation we never by our rational Powers and Faculties could have come to the Knowledge and Belief of these Truths.

Such was the great Mystery of our Redemption by the Incarnation of the Son of God, *even the hidden Wisdom, which God ordained before the World unto our Glory*; 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.  
*which none of the Princes of this World knew: For had they known it they would not have*  
cru-

Serm. V.

1 Tim. iii.  
16.

*crucified the Lord of Glory.* Such were also the several other particular Mysteries of the Christian Religion, which could never have entred into the Heart of Man to believe, had they not been in holy Scripture revealed to us. *And without Controversy great is the Mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory.* But not only the supernatural Doctrines and sublime Mysteries of our most holy Religion, but the spiritual Precepts of it, and our whole Duty, are contained in Scripture. For it hath pleased God, not only to reveal supernatural Truths, but to explain and command, enforce and exalt Moral Truths, to the Intent that all, both learned and unlearned, high and low, rich and poor may come to the Knowledge of the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; and by Faith in Christ and Repentance towards God may obtain eternal Life. And indeed great is the Use and Benefit of the holy Scriptures to all Sorts of Men; but especially to the Bulk and Generality of Mankind, whose Condition and Circumstances of Life will not allow them Time and Opportunity to examine into the

the Nature and Reason of Things, and *Serm. V.*  
to investigate their Duty by the Strength  
of their rational Faculties, and a due  
Application of their natural Parts. And  
yet these Persons chiefly constitute the  
Body of Mankind, and consequently their  
Good and Happiness must be primarily  
consulted and provided for by the great  
Creator of Heaven and Earth; the com-  
mon Parent of all Mankind.

And even other Persons, whose Cir-  
cumstances will permit them, and whose  
Inclinations lead them to be studious and  
speculative, and who therefore may be  
capable of demonstrating the great Truths  
of Morality and natural Religion; who  
upon a serious Consideration and an im-  
partial Enquiry into the Effects and Fi-  
nal Causes of Things, observable in the  
World, may conceive just Notions and  
right Apprehensions of God Almighty,  
and may be perswaded of the Immorta-  
lity of the Soul, and of a future State  
of Rewards and Punishments in ano-  
ther Life; even these speculative and  
philosophical Gentlemen cannot but re-  
ceive great Satisfaction and Comfort to  
find their natural Notions of these Things  
perfectly agreeable and consonant to di-  
vine Revelation; and consequently be  
highly pleased and delighted to see them-  
selves



~ selves thereby confirmed and strengthened and settled in their Judgments and Opinions about them. So that the holy Scriptures are an inestimable Treasure and an immense Benefit and Advantage to all Degrees of Persons, who will be at the Pains diligently to study and peruse them.

But supposing the great Lines of our Duty, the *Magna Moralia*, as they are called, may be traced out and demonstrated by a sagacious and thoughtful Moralist; yet how much more easy is it for us to understand our Duty, when plainly made known and prescribed to us by an express Revelation from God? And considering how liable to Mistakes all Mankind are, and how apt the clearest Heads and soundest Judgments are to err and wander out of the Way of Truth, even in Matters strictly demonstrable, it cannot but be acknowledged a great Advantage and Happiness to have a sure and certain Rule to guide and direct us in all the Ways of true Piety, Soberness, and Righteousness. And how certain soever some Men now-a-days are of the Principles and Precepts of Morality and natural Religion, they ought not to forget how much they are beholden and indebted to the holy Scriptures

tures for their Assistance and Guidance *Serm. V.*  
towards the forming true Notions and  
right Judgments of these Things. And  
this they ought not to be unwilling  
to own, considering how wavering and  
uncertain the best and greatest Heathen  
Philosophers were about the most mo-  
mentous and interesting Points of Reli-  
gion: And these Heathens were Men of  
as good natural Parts, and accustomed  
themselves to Speculation and Reasoning  
about these Matters as much as, or more  
than our modern Pretenders to Reason  
and Argument generally do.

It is much more easy to understand the  
the Demonstrations of *Euclid's* Elements,  
than it would be to investigate the Truth  
of those Propositions by our own Deduc-  
tions, upon the closest Thought and  
strongest Attention: And though now  
we are supplied with many excellent Trea-  
tises of Morality, we may observe their  
Basis and Foundation in holy Scripture,  
and they are only so far true as they agree  
with that, or at least are not contrary to  
it; for where there is any Contrariety,  
the Truth upon a thorough Exami-  
nation will always be found to lie in a  
right Interpretation of Scripture. And  
how much more suitable and better a-  
dapted to the common Apprehension and  
Judg-

Serm. V.

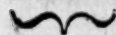
Judgment of Mankind those general Precepts are, which, though dispersed and scattered in holy Writ, are plain and obvious and carry their own Reasonableness and Evidence in them, than learned Systems of Morality, composed with great Art and Subtlety, and Methodically digested, daily Observation and Experience may convince us; which proves that the Generality of Men have not Leisure from their necessary Businesses and Employments, or are not sufficiently qualified by their Education or natural Endowments, to understand and put in Practice those nice Speculations and Theories.

1 Cor. ii. 4, 5. St Paul says, *That my Speech and my Preaching was not with enticing Words of Man's Wisdom, but in Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power: that your Faith should not stand in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God.* And indeed the Gospel of Christ is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth, as both its Doctrines and Precepts are taught and commanded by the full Authority of God, as has been openly and publicly declared and testified by many great and undeniable Miracles. And the Sanctions annexed to the Obedience or Disobedience to this Gospel are of the utmost Consequence and Moment, even the most exquisite and eternal

eternal Rewards or Punishments of another Life. And these are the great Instruments in the hands of God to enforce Obedience to his Laws, by working upon our Passions, our Hopes and Fears, where the Excellency and Reasonableness of those Laws themselves will not prevail upon the Tempers and Dispositions of our Minds, from a Principle of Love to God and Goodness, sincerely and heartily to obey them. And it is this Power and Authority of God, which neither *Socrates* nor *Plato*, nor *Aristotle* nor *Cicero* could, nor any of our modern Philosophers can claim to give a Sanction to their Rules and Precepts of good Living, that renders the Gospel so mighty to persuade Men to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; and hence appears a good Reason why God in his infinite Wisdom thought fit to defer the Incarnation of our blessed Saviour and Promulgation of his Gospel for so many Years after the Fall of *Adam*; that Men might by their own Experience plainly see and be convinced of the Want and Expediency of a divine Revelation to lead them to the Knowledge and Worship of the one only true God, and the Practice of sincere Piety and Virtue, forsaking the many Errors and Deviations,



Serm. V.



Acts xvii.

30.

tions, the great Sins and Impieties they had so long lived in; and wherein they had for ever continued, had not God, after *winking at the Times of their Ignorance*, now commanded all Men every where to repent.

But not only thus much is to be understood by the Spirit of Revelation, mentioned in my Text, but those Words will bear another Sense and Interpretation, and may very properly signify the supernatural Power and Influence of the holy Spirit of God to dispose and incline our Hearts and Minds to believe and embrace a divine Revelation, and to conform our Life and Practice according to it. And this the holy Spirit effects and works in us, by inspiring us with a sober, serious, and thoughtful Frame and Temper of Mind, and a due degree of Modesty and Humility, and a Willingness and Desire to be taught and instructed in the true Religion; and this is to be done by renouncing and breaking off all vicious Courses and Habits, and by resolving to entertain the Truth in the Love of it, and to live according to it in Sincerity, Purity, and Righteousness. For it is principally owing to the Operation of God's Spirit upon our Minds, that we receive the Truth out of

of Love to it, and are inwardly and heartily inclined and disposed resolutely and constantly to own and confess it, and by a suitable Life and Conversation publicly to maintain and avow it. For though the Evidence of Truth is often so plain and convincing, that we cannot help perceiving it; yet it is the Spirit of God that inclines us to embrace it, to love it, and delight in it, and to confess it openly and publicly before Men, and, if we should be called to it, to die in the Defence and Vindication of it. Serm. V.

St Paul, speaking concerning spiritual Gifts, expressly declares, *that no Man can say, that Jesus is the Lord, but by the holy Ghost.* From whence we may understand, that the Confession of our Faith in Christ is the Effect of the holy Ghost, influencing our Hearts and Mouths; without whose Influence in turning and disposing our Minds to Faith in Christ, *we could not with the Heart believe unto Righteousness, nor with the Mouth make Confession unto Salvation.* But this brings me to what I proposed, 1 Cor. xii. 13.

III. To endeavour to explain the Sense of the Expression *in the Knowledge of him*; or, as the Original Words will bear, *for the Acknowledgement of him.*

Serm. V.

Expositors disagree in their Opinion; whether the Word *Him*, relates to God or to Christ; and indeed it may be understood of either in a very good Sense. But if we consider the three subsequent Verses, it will appear, that God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is here meant. And by this Knowledge of God, I think, is principally intended the saving Knowledge of the Gospel, that great Mystery of our Redemption by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; *even the Mystery, which hath been hid from Ages and Generations, but now is made manifest to his Saints.* Wherein God hath abounded toward us in all Wisdom and Prudence, having made known unto us the Mystery of his Will, according to his good Pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: *That in the Dispensation of the Fulness of Times, he might gather together in one all Things in Christ*; as we read in the former part of this Chapter, verses 8, 9, 10. And in like manner we find St Paul very desirous and anxious, that the *Colossians* and the *Laodiceans*, and as many as never saw him, *might come to the Acknowledgement of the Mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.*

Herein

*Of the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation.*

101

Herein hath appeared the unsearch-  
able Wisdom of God, *even the hidden Wis-*  
*dom of God ordained before the World unto*  
*our Glory. Which Things the Angels desire*  
*to look into.*

Serm. V.

1 Cor. ii.

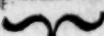
1 Peter i.

12.

But if we follow the other Exposition of the Text, and render it *for the Acknowledgement of him*, the Words will admit of another Sense, which though not intended by the Apostle, I believe, in this Place, is of like Import, with the Expressions of the same Apostle in his second Epistle to *Timothy*, ii. 25. and in the first Verse of his Epistle to *Titus*. The Words in the former Passage run thus. *If God peradventure will give them Repentance to the Acknowledgement of the Truth*; in the latter Passage thus, *according to the Faith of God's Elect, and the acknowledging of the Truth, which is after Godliness.*

Now there is in the Mind of Man a natural Faculty, which may be properly called a moral Sense, whereby we are by a Sort of Instinct disposed to love and approve of Truth and Virtue, and to be pleased and delighted with the Knowledge of the one, and Practice of the other: especially when the Mind is not clouded with the Fumes and Vapours of Intemperance and Lust; nor



Serm. V.  the Judgment biassed and perverted by corrupt and vicious Habits; and when the small Remains of pure and uncorrupt Nature are at liberty, and by the Assistance of God's holy Spirit are enabled to exert and exercise themselves. For according to St Paul, *We delight in the Law of God after the inward Man.*

Rom. vii.  
22, 23.

But I shall not now enter upon this Subject, especially as I conceive it foreign to my Text, and therefore shall conclude with a short Inference or two from what hath been already said.

1. Though our Duty in general be plain and obvious, and easily practised; yet because some Cases are so perplexed and complicated, that we cannot understand them, and therefore know not how to act; in all such Cases the general Rules of the Christian Religion are of admirable Use and Benefit to all Sorts of Persons: Such as these are; *Whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them. Let all your Things be done with Charity or Love. If our Heart condemn us, God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all Things: Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.*

Matt. vii.  
12.

1 Cor.

xvi. 14.

1 John iii.

20, 21.

2. Hence let us thankfully acknowledge, admire, and adore the gracious Good-

Goodness and Mercy of God to Man-  
kind in making our Sincerity and Faith  
in Christ the easy Terms and Conditions  
of the Gospel, wherein he hath made us  
accepted in the Beloved, who is our Sa-  
crifice and Atonement, having reconcil-  
ed us to the Father through his Blood ;  
and through whose Merits and Mediation  
our imperfect Righteousness and Obedi-  
ence shall be rewarded, and ourselves,  
though unworthy, crowned with ever-  
lasting Joy and Felicity : To whom, with  
the Father and the holy Spirit, be all Ho-  
nour and Glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Serm. V.  
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28 SE60

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## S E R M O N VI.

The Favour of God the only Happiness of Man.

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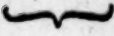
### P S A L M IV. 6.

*There be many that say, Who will shew us any Good? Lord lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon us.*

**I**N speaking to which Words, I Serm. VI.  
shall,

I. Observe, that there is no Question of so great Weight and Moment, and which so much concerns every one of us to be fully resolved and satisfied about, as the Search and Enquiry, wherein consists the true and proper Happiness of Man? And consequently there is no Subject so becoming every wise and considering



Serm. VI.  ing Man to employ his Thoughts and Care and Time about, as the chief Good; what this is, wherein it consists, and how it is to be obtained? For before we come to a Resolution of this interesting Question, we do but seek for Happiness in the dark, and it is highly probable, we shall never find it. And therefore the first Thing a wise Man ought to propose to himself is the Consideration of this Matter, as soon as he comes to Years of Discretion, and to have the full Use and Exercise of his Reason and Judgment; before he engages and entangles himself too far in the Affairs of Life: Though, to our Misfortune and Unhappiness be it spoken, where shall we find the Man that doth this?

It is very true, and we daily see it, every Man is in Pursuit of Happiness; some in this Way, and some in that: Some warmly pursue sensual Pleasures and Delights: some with great Labour and Pains, Care and Anxiety, heap up Riches, and enlarge their Estates; some eagerly hunt after Preferment and are ambitious of distinguishing Titles and eminent Dignities, of high Stations and Posts of Honour; others apply themselves to Speculation and Study, and desire Ease and Retirement from the Noise and Hurry and

and Bustle of the World: all of them in Serm. VI. their several Ways propose to themselves Happiness, but are generally disappointed, because they know not what Happiness is, wherein it consists, and how to come at it. Insomuch that some have questioned the Reality of the Thing itself, and have maintained, that Happiness is only imaginary, because Men have taken so many different, and sometimes contrary Courses in the Pursuit of it. But however mistaken the Generality of Mankind may be about Happiness, it is no Chimera, nor empty Notion, but a fixt and certain Thing, and may truly be defined to be the State and Condition of any Being in the full Enjoyment of its supreme Good.

But though this be the Solution of this grand Question, in the general Sense of it; namely, That Happiness is the Enjoyment of the chief Good; yet still the Question returns, What is the chief Good; and in particular, what is the chief Good of Man? Surely, saith *Job*, Job xxviii. 1, 12, 13. *there is a Vein for the Silver, and a Place for Gold, where they mine it. But where shall Wisdom be found? And where is the Place of Understanding? Man knoweth not the Price thereof.* That is, Though Man by his hard Labour and Study attains to the Knowledge of natural Things, yet

Serm. VI.

yet does he continue ignorant of Wisdom, which in holy Writ is but another Name for Happiness. *Whence then com-*

Jobxxviii.

22, 23.

*eth Wisdom, seeing it is hid from the Eyes of all living? We may say, we have heard the Fame thereof with our Ears. But God only understandeth the Way thereof, and he know-*

*eth the Path thereof. God alone knoweth what Happiness is, wherein it lies, and how to possess and enjoy it. He is the Source and Fountain of all Good; from whom alone it springs and derives in different Degrees to all his Creatures. And*

Verse 28.

*to Man he said, Behold, the Fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom; and to depart from Evil, is Understanding. To believe in God, and to have due Apprehensions of his divine Nature and Attributes, to acknowledge and adore him as our Creator and Preserver, our Governor and Redeemer and Judge; to live as becometh rational Creatures in the Sight of his infinite Majesty, is the true Wisdom of Man, and his only Happiness. This is Job's Solution of the great Question, What is the chief Good, or supreme Felicity of Man?*

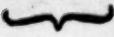
*And in Confirmation of the Truth of Job's Solution of this Question, I shall produce the Opinion and Judgment of King Solomon concerning it, who was the wisest Man that ever lived, and had the*

the best and greatest Opportunities of Serm. VI.  
judging rightly about it, and who took  
true Pains, and was very desirous to  
be fully satisfied herein. His immense  
Riches and superlative Wisdom, his  
mighty Power and extensive Dominions,  
all of them possessed and enjoyed by the  
same Person, rendered him the best qua-  
lified and able of any Man to search and  
find out wherein consists the chief Good  
or highest Happiness of Man.

And the Method he took to make this  
Discovery was by Trial and Experiment  
and Matter of Fact; a Method, which  
must be acknowledged by all to be fully  
satisfactory and convincing, and adapted  
to the meanest, as well as greatest Capa-  
city; and the Success of all his Labours,  
and the Result of his several Trials and  
Observations, he hath let us know in his  
admirable Treatise of *Ecclesiastes*, which  
ends with these memorable Words; *Let*  
*us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter,* Ecclef. xii.  
*Fear God and keep his Commandments, for* 13.  
*this is the whole Duty of Man.*

Which Words are so plain, and the  
Sense of them so obvious, that I shall  
spend no Time in the Explication of  
them; I shall only observe to you, that  
the Word Duty is not to be found in  
the Original *Hebrew*; nor indeed is it  
in



Serm. VI.  in the Translations from it. The Septuagint and Vulgar render the Words, *This is all or every Man*, and the Chaldee Paraphrase explains them, *this ought to be the Way and Course of all Mankind*; This is what every Man is designed for; This is every Man's Interest, according to other Versions: And the Commentators on the Place expound it, This is the End of every Man, This is the Duty, This is the Good, This is the Happiness of every Man: Without which, *Vanity of Vanities*, saith the Preacher, *all is Vanity*.

Thus have we the Sentiments of *Solomon* and *Job* about this important Question, What is the chief Good, or supreme Happiness of Man? And the Words of my Text declare the Judgment of King *David* concerning the same; namely, That in the Favour and Countenance, in the Love and Friendship of Almighty God, consists the true Interest, the sovereign Good, and only Happiness of Man. *There be many that say, Who will shew us any Good? Lord lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon us.*

In my further Discourse upon which Words I shall fully prove, that in the favourable Countenance and Love of God, and in his Image and Likeness is  
to

*The Favour of God the only Happiness of Man.*    **III**  
to be placed the true and perfect Happiness of Man.    **Serm. VI.**

I. Because God is the first Cause and original Author of all Good.

II. Because God alone is the true and proper, complete and adequate Object of our Happiness.

III. Because the Image and Resemblance of God, and our Assimilation and Conformity to the divine Nature is the only State and Condition, the true Temper and Disposition of Happiness, and the necessary Means and Qualification for God's Favour and the Light of his Countenance.

I. God is the first Cause and original Author of all Good, from whom every Ray and every Degree of Goodness flows and derives. To God we owe ourselves, our Souls and Bodies and every Power and Faculty of both. Now as Life and Being is the Foundation of all Happiness, without which we could have no Enjoyment of it; so God Almighty, to whom we owe our Life and Being, and all other Creatures theirs also, without whose Use and Benefit we could not possibly subsist, He must be confessed to be the Author and Giver of all good Things,

Serm. VI. Things, without whom Nothing had been, no Creature good, none happy.

But God Almighty not only at first created us and all Things, visible and invisible, both in Heaven and Earth, but he continually preserves us and all the World, upholding us in Being, and enabling us to live and move and act according to our Nature. For as we ourselves did not make ourselves, so neither are we sufficient of ourselves to support ourselves, nor to prolong our Life, and continue in Being; but it is God that upholds us and keeps us in Being, and concurs and co-operates with us in all our Actions. And that Being, on whom we thus continually and entirely depend, most certainly we must be obliged to for all the Good we have, or can enjoy: He is our great Benefactor, and the only Donor of all our Happiness.

And not only did God make us at first, and still preserves us, and keeps us in Being; but he also rules and governs us, and all the World: He is the great Lord of the Universe, who guides and steers the Effects and directs the Events of all the Motions and Actions of every individual Creature in it, whether they be animate or inanimate, rational or  
irra-

irrational : all Events and all Effects of all Serm. VI.  
Causes and all Agents, both Natural and Moral, necessary or free or accidental, are directed and appointed or permitted by God ; So that whatever we say or do, whatever we design or project, whatever Instruments we make use of to attain any End, however probable the Means may be, still the Success of all depends upon the Divine Providence : and consequently all we wish, and all we want, all we desire and all we hope for, must in the Issue and Result of Things be entirely owing to the Favour and Blessing of Almighty God. What Reason therefore have we to acknowledge God in all our Ways ; and in all our Endeavours after Happiness to rely upon his Blessing ?

II. God alone is the true and proper, compleat and adequate Object of our Happiness. For no Creature, no, not the whole Creation can satisfy all the Wants and Desires of our Soul. The Capacities of our Mind are too large to be contented with any finite Good.

I have before observed, that whatever Good there may be in the Creatures, by which they may be useful and beneficial to us, and contribute to our Happiness,



Serm. VI. nefs, it is all derived from God, who is the Fountain of all Good, and the Giver of it to all his Creatures. So that whatever Good or Virtue any Creature possesses or enjoys, it is either in its Nature or Degree infinitely transcendent in God; upon which Account God may be said to be the principal Object of our Happiness, as all the Excellencies and Perfections of the Creatures are but so many Rays and Emanations of his exuberant Goodness. But more especially and for a much greater Reason God is the only true and proper Object of our Happiness, as he alone is such a Good, as is justly adequate and commensurate and equal to all the Capacities and Desires, all the Wishes and Longings of our Souls.

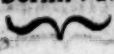
God alone is an all-sufficient Good. He is perfect and infinite Goodness, an inexhaustible Fountain of Bliss and Joy. The Sun in the Firmament is not so necessary to our Pleasure and Delight, as the Light of his Countenance is to our Satisfaction and Comfort. All other Beings have their Failings and Imperfections, and their Natures are so narrow and finite, that there is no Dependence upon them; and the Good they afford is so uncertain, so transient, so vain and empty and unsatisfactory, that  
our

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our Souls are still desiring something <sup>Serm. VI.</sup> better and more substantial, more certain and durable and sufficient to fill up all our Wants and Capacities. But this is no where to be found but in God alone.

Were we in the Possession and Enjoyment of some great Good, we should desire it might not change, but there is nothing unchangeable but God; we should desire we might not lose, nor be deprived of this Good, but we can have no Security of this, but in God; we should desire this Good might be eternal, for were it temporary, it would be uneasy to our immortal Spirits to think of a Time when we should be deprived of it, and want it, but the Eternity of any Creature depends entirely upon the sole Will and Pleasure of God. And however some inferior Good may please and delight us for a Time, nothing but an immense Good is fully adequate to our Nature or can satisfy and content all the Desires of our Souls; but nothing but God Almighty can pretend to be this to us.

But God is not only an all-sufficient, immutable, all-powerful, and an eternal Good, but perfect Goodness. He is not only infinitely happy in himself, but is disposed and inclinable to communicate

Serm. VI.  ness to all his Creatures, according to their several Natures and Capacities; but more especially does his Goodness and loving Kindness extend to Man in particular, whom alone of all his Creatures he is said in Scripture *to love*, and consequently the Happiness of Man is God's principal Care and Concernment. And happy indeed should we be, did we but know our own Happiness, who have God for our Friend, our Patron and Benefactor! What greater Happiness can we desire, than to be the Object of infinite Love? To be protected and defended by Omnipotence, to be guided and conducted by unerring Wisdom, to be supported and comforted by perfect Goodness, and at last to be crowned and rewarded, and received up into Glory by infinite Mercy. But,

III. The Image and Resemblance of God, and our Assimilation and Conformity to the Divine Nature is the only State and Condition, the true Temper and Disposition of Happiness, and the necessary Means and Qualification for God's Favour and the Light of his Countenance. In the Image and Favour of God consists our Happiness.

It

It is absolutely necessary, that we <sup>Serm. VI.</sup> should be like and resemble God, that we may be fit Objects of his Favour and Love. For it is impossible for God to like or love any Thing unlike and disagreeable to himself. So that our Assimilation and Conformity to the Deity, or in the Words of St Peter, *that we be Partakers of a divine Nature*, is the one and only Condition and Qualification of ever being Partakers of the divine Blessedness. The Image therefore of God must be first recovered, by an Imitation of the divine Excellencies and Perfections in our Mind and Temper, as a previous Disposition and Qualification, in order to render us fit and worthy Objects of God's Favour and Friendship.

Now the great Design of our Saviour's Coming into the World being to reinstate Man in God's Favour, by restoring Man to God's Image, we shall the better and more fully understand, wherein the Image of God in Man does consist, by considering what are the Terms and Conditions of the new Covenant. And in general it is required of every Christian, who believes in Christ, *that he put off concerning the former Conversion the old Man, which is corrupt, according* <sup>Ephes. iv. 22, 23, 24.</sup>



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Serm. VI. *according to the deceitful Lusts: and be renewed in the Spirit of his Mind; and that he put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness.*

Here it is very observable, that St Paul means by the new Man the Image of God in Man; for this new Man is said to be created after God; and further this new Man is said to be created in Righteousness and true Holiness, or Holiness of Truth; and therefore that the Image of God in Man consists in Righteousness and Truth. As the old Man is said to be corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts, by which the Corruption and Depravity of human Nature is signified, which is required to be put off by every Christian; so the new Man to be put on signifies our original Righteousness and true Holiness, wherein we were at first created.

Holiness and Purity is the End and Design of the Christian Religion, what all its Doctrines and Precepts lead to, and what all its Promises and Threatnings were intended to promote and advance in this Life, as the requisite Terms and Conditions of our Salvation, and the necessary Qualifications and Dispositions for all the Glory and Happiness, we expect in the next. For the Virtues of a Christian Life are the Elements

ments and first Principles of a Christian's Perfection, as Grace is the Beginning of Glory, and Glory the Perfection of Grace; and as the good Habits and Qualities we contract in this World, we shall carry with us into the other, there to be improved and raised to higher and higher Degrees of Perfection for ever and ever. The Truth of this may be proved from what St John saith, *Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him: for we shall see him as he is, and every Man that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.* <sup>1 John iii. 2, 3.</sup>

The Knowledge we now have of our future State and Condition is very imperfect, only thus much we know, that when we shall see God, as he is, we shall be like him: Which Likeness to God is previous and necessary, in the Nature of the Thing to the Sight and Enjoyment of him. For there can be no Concord or Agreement, no Love or Unity, where there is no Similitude, no Conformity of Nature and Temper, of Mind and Disposition.

Now so much God hath been pleased to reveal of himself at present, which

*Serm. VI.* is very agreeable to our natural Notions of him, that he is pure and holy, free from all manner of Defilement and Pollution, and infinitely removed from all Sin and Vice; that no Evil, natural or moral, cleaves unto him, and that he is of purer Eyes than to behold the least Iniquity in any of his Creatures; and therefore if ever we hope to come to the blessed Sight and Enjoyment of God, we must be holy as he is holy, and pure as he is pure.

The infinite Blessedness of God consists in the perfect Rectitude of his divine Nature, which is his Love of Righteousness and Holiness. *St John* repeats it twice in his first Epistle, ch. iv. 8, 16. *God is Love.* And the Image of God in us consists in our Likeness to him in the same Affection. Therefore if there be the like Mind, the like Will, and the like Spirit in God and in us, we partake of his Nature, and are united to him, and we dwell in him, and he in us. This is our Spiritual Life, thus God lives in all good Men; whereas the Wicked are alienated from the Life of God. But if we take care to walk before God in Holiness and Righteousness all our Days, his holy Spirit will abide in us, and enable us to live such  
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Spiritual Lives, that when we come to die, every one of us may say with holy Serm. VI.  
*David, As for me, I will behold thy Face*  
*in Righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when*  
*I awake with thy Likeness, Psalm xvii. 15.*  
Which God, &c.



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The Father of God the only High King of Heaven. 121  
 Spiritual Lives: that when we come to  
 die, every one of us may say with holy  
 David, As for me, I will behold thy face  
 in Righteousness; I shall be justified, when  
 I awake and the Likeness of thine own  
 Which God, &c.



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SERMON

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## S E R M O N VII.

### Of the Happiness of the Just by Faith.

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ROMANS I. 17.

*For therein is the Righteousness of God revealed from Faith to Faith: as it is written, The Just shall live by Faith.*

**I**N the Verse immediately preceding, St Paul declares he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the Power of God unto Salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. When the Jews required a Sign, and the Greeks sought after Wisdom, the Apostle was not ashamed to preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a Stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks Foolishness: But unto them

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1 Cor. i.  
23, 24.

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*them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.* The Jews expected, that when the Messiah came, he would be a temporal Prince and their mighty Deliverer, and therefore could not believe in a crucified Saviour; and the Greeks busied themselves in the Study and Knowledge of the liberal Arts and Sciences, and there did not appear to them any Wisdom in the Cross of Christ, nor was it agreeable and consonant to their Philosophy.

Verse 25.

*But the Foolishness of God is wiser than Men; and the Weakness of God is stronger than Men.* For the Doctrine of Christ crucified, delivered in the Gospel, is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. And the Wisdom of God in his Method and Manner of our Redemption through Faith, infinitely excels all the Learning and Philosophy of Men. And in my Text the Apostle gives this Reason why he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but prefers it to any other Knowledge; *For therein is the Righteousness of God revealed from Faith to Faith: as it is written, The Just shall live by Faith.*

In discoursing upon which Words I shall,

I. Consider what this Righteousness of God is, which is said in the Text to be *revealed from Faith to Faith*, and shew wherein it consists.

II. I shall observe that this Righteousness of God mentioned in the Text is said to be revealed in the Gospel of Christ.

III. I shall take Notice of the Words in my Text, *from Faith to Faith*.

IV. and lastly, I shall take into Consideration the remaining Part of my Text, *as it is written, The Just shall live by Faith*.

I. I shall consider, what this Righteousness of God is, which is said in the Text to be *revealed from Faith to Faith*, and shew wherein it consists. And that my following Discourse upon this Subject may be the better understood, I shall define and explain what Righteousness in general is. Righteousness in general is a Conformity of Will and Practice to the Nature and Reason of Persons and Things or of their Ideas in the Mind of an intelligent free Being. For it is not necessary that the Persons or Things themselves should actually exist that the Nature and Reason of them may be truly perceived and understood; for their



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their mutual Respects and Relations, their Properties and Proportions may be clearly and certainly known from a Comparison of their Ideas only in the Mind and Understanding. And thus God foreknew all Things from all Eternity by their Ideas only, which pre-existed in the divine Mind before any Thing was actually made. And thus we reason and discourse of Things by their Ideas, when the Things themselves are not present to our Understanding, but only their Ideas.

Now God Almighty by his infinite Prescience foreseeing and foreknowing all Things and their several Qualities and Dependences upon one another, when he was pleased to exert and exercise his Wisdom, Power, and Goodness in the Creation of all Things visible and invisible, as all his external Acts were perfectly freely and voluntary, so he made all Things in Number, Weight, and Measure, and still preserves and governs all Things by the most exact and strictest Rules of universal Truth and Righteousness.

As God is the most rational Being we can conceive, so all his Actions are just and true, right and good, and all his Proceedings with his Creatures, all his Dispen-  
pensions

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penfations towards them either of Goodness and Mercy, or of Justice and Severity, are conducted and directed by him with the highest Reason, Wisdom and Counsel. So that we may truly say with the Royal Psalmist, *The Lord is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works*; Whether we reflect on his Creation of all Things in the Beginning, or his continual Preservation of all his Creatures according to their several Natures, or his Government of all rational Beings with the most perfect Righteousness, Wisdom, and Goodness.

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17.

And as God is by his Nature and Essence most perfectly righteous, so he cannot but approve of and love Righteousness, and hate and abhor all manner of Unrighteousness in any of his Creatures. And when he hath endowed his Creatures with Powers and Abilities to know and perform their Duty and Obedience to him, he cannot but expect their reasonable Service of Fidelity and Allegiance, Honour and Worship; and upon their Disloyalty and Disobedience withdraw his Favour and Countenance from them, and punish them with the Fruit of their own Doings. But still there may be room for Mercy towards some of God's rebellious Creatures, according

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According to the Circumstances and Nature of their Crimes. And this was the Case of our first Parents in Paradise, who were seduced and drawn in by the Tempter to transgress God's express Command; and therefore God was pleased to consider and commiserate their unhappy Case and Condition, and to be merciful unto them and promise them Pardon and Reconciliation upon the Terms and Conditions revealed in the Gospel of Christ. This brings me,

II. To observe, that this Righteousness of God, mentioned in the Text, is said to be revealed in the Gospel of Christ.

The Corruption and Depravity of human Nature, and the Propensity and Prone-ness of Mankind to Sin and Vice, hath been the Observation and Complaint of the wisest Men in all Ages, though they knew not, nor could they discover by the Light of Nature from whence this Corruption did proceed. The natural Notions and Apprehensions which they had of God Almighty, led them to believe this sinful Disposition and Inclination was not the original State and Condition of Man, when he was at first formed by God; for from a holy and righteous

teous Being a wicked Creature could not truly and properly proceed, any more than from a clean Thing any Thing that is unclean. But though they were ignorant of the true Spring and Origin of Man's Degeneracy, they were very sensible of the Bent and Inclination of Mankind to Sin and Wickedness, which is the Effect and Consequence of this Degeneracy. Now all Sin is odious and offensive to God, as he appears both by the Light of Nature and by express Revelation in holy Scripture to be a most holy, pure, and righteous Being. But by the original Infection of their Nature all Mankind are prone to Sin, and should the best of us *say we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us*: Since therefore we are all more or less naturally inclined to Sin, and notwithstanding our best Endeavours to the contrary cannot help frequently falling into it; since this hath been the State and Condition of all Men from the Time of *Adam's* Transgression, it is very reasonable to hope and believe God would have Mercy on good and pious Men who endeavoured to serve and please him in the best manner they could.

But then it must be left to God how far he will accept the weak and imperfect



fect Services of Men, which in the best of them are attended with Defects and Failings, and cannot amount to true and perfect Righteousness, which is the only Righteousness God can be truly pleased with, and is agreeable to his most pure and perfect Nature. Altho' therefore good and religious Men in all Ages of the World might hope for Pardon and Forgiveness of their many voluntary Transgressions, and that God in Mercy would overlook their Failings and Miscarriages even in their best Services, yet considering the most righteous, holy, pure, and perfect Nature of God, and his most wise and just Administration and Government of the Universe, it cannot be discovered upon the Principles of human Reason alone, in what Way and Method and upon what Terms and Conditions God will be merciful to his sinful Creatures, and be perfectly reconciled to them, and receive them into his Grace and Favour, so as to reward their sincere, tho' imperfect Service and Obedience with everlasting Life and Blessedness. But this Method of Man's Salvation and Reconciliation with God, with all the Benefits and Blessings consequent upon Christ's Merits and Mediation with God in our behalf, are in the Gospel of Christ revealed from  
Faith

Faith to Faith: we are herein taught, *Serm. VII.*  
that God was in Christ reconciling the World *2 Cor. v.*  
unto himself, not imputing their Trespases  
unto them. *19.*

It was one great Design of St Paul in writing this Epistle to the Romans, to convince them, that all Mankind were Sinners in the Sight of God, and that there was no Difference in this respect between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned *Rom. iii. 23, 24.* and come short of the Glory of God. Being justified freely by his Grace, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ. That in the Ages to come he might shew the exceeding Riches of his Grace in his Kindness towards us, through Jesus Christ. For by Christ are ye saved, through Faith; *Gal. ii. 7, 8, 9.* and that not of yourselves: It is the Gift of God: Not of Works, lest any Man should boast; as the same Apostle tells us.

Therefore the most righteous Man upon Earth, could not by his own Works lay a Claim to Justification before God. But it was the free Grace and Kindness of God towards us, which disposed him to take the miserable State of sinful Man into his Consideration, and in his Wisdom to contrive and undertake the great Work of his Redemption by sending his only begotten Son into the World to be a Propitiation for our Sins; so that con-

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sistently with his essential Purity and Holiness, the Righteousness of his Laws, and the Dignity and Authority of his Government, he might receive us again into Favour, and accept our imperfect Obedience for perfect Righteousness through Faith in Christ. As therefore the whole Work of our Salvation was the sole Contrivance of God, from the Beginning to the End; and as our Faith in God's Mercy through Christ renders us righteous in God's Sight, and as all the Articles of our Belief are particularly set down in the Gospel of Christ, St Paul had very good Reason to say in my Text, *For therein is the Righteousness of God revealed from Faith to Faith.* And in his Epistle to the Philippians to desire to be *found in Christ, not having his own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.* But this brings me,

Phil iii. 9.

III. To take Notice of the Words in my Text, *from Faith to Faith.*

The whole Method and Oeconomy of Man's Salvation through Christ is purely and entirely a Matter of Faith, far above the Reach and Thought of Man to devise and contrive, much less accomplish and

and effect, and consequently would never have entered into the Heart of Man to conceive, had not God in holy Scripture been pleased to reveal it. So many Mysteries are contained in God's gracious Dispensation of Mercy towards the sinful Sons of Men, through the Merits and Intercession of his most dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ, which we cannot but admire and adore, but can never fully understand, that it is the great Exercise and Employment of our Faith truly to believe them all separately and distinctly, now they are revealed, and therefore by Degrees and an Increase in Faith do we gradually come to the Belief of them; and therefore is the Righteousness of God said by the Apostle to be revealed in the Gospel of Christ *from Faith to Faith.*

The first and original Design of God in the Redemption of Man by no less a Person than his eternal Son, the Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person; and this Son his only begotten, the nearest and dearest to him, and best beloved, and by sending him into the World in so poor and despicable a Condition, to undergo such cruel Usage and ignominious Treatment, and at last to suffer such a painful, bitter, cursed



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Death, even the Death of the Cross, that he might be the Propitiation for our Sins; when we consider this as the main Article of our Faith, how are we astonished with Wonder and Amazement at the Belief of it? The Incarnation of the Son of God, his Life and Death and Resurrection, his glorious Ascension and his Intercession for us at the right Hand of his Father, with the Mission of the holy Ghost the Comforter, are all strange and surprising Doctrines, which we are taught in the Gospel to believe. And that all this should be done for us, out of pure Grace and Kindness to us, to deliver us from the bitter Pains of eternal Death, and to raise us from the Grave to an immortal Life of Bliss and Glory; this we may be all assured of if we believe the Promises of God made to us in his Son, and take Care to perform the Terms and Conditions required of us in his Gospel. *For God so loved the World, saith St John, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.*

John iii.  
16.Rom. v.  
1, 2.

*Therefore being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have Access by Faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice*

rejoice in the Hope of the Glory of God. For when we were yet without strength, in due Time Christ died for the ungodly. Now the Righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; even the Righteousness of God, which is by Faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. Behold, the Days come, saith the Lord by the Mouth of his Prophet Jeremiah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute Judgment and Justice in the Earth; and this is his Name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness. Herein hath the Wisdom and Power of God appeared unto Salvation, to every one that believeth in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption. Thus is the Righteousness of God declared in holy Scripture from Faith to Faith. I proceed in the

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Rom. iii.

21, 22.

Jer. xxiii.

5, 6.

1 Cor. i 30.

IV. Place to take into Consideration the last and remaining Part of my Text, as it is written, *The Just shall live by Faith.* Thus we find it written in *Habakkuck*; But *the Just shall live by Faith.* Thus *St John* in his Gospel witnesseth, *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life: and he that believeth not on the Son, shall not see*

Hab. ii. 4.

John iii.

36.

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Gal. iii. 11.

*Life; but the Wrath of God abideth on him.*  
 Thus St Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians; *But that no Man is justified by the Law in the sight of God, it is evident: for the Just shall live by Faith.* From all which Places of sacred Writ it is evident that Faith is the Support and Comfort of a righteous Man in this Life, and the Foundation of his Hope and Expectation of Joy and rejoicing and everlasting Happiness in the Life to come.

Rom. iii.  
 9, 10.

1 John i. 8.

But here it is to be observed, who are to be understood as just and righteous in the Language of holy Scripture. It is plain therein is not meant any mere Man absolutely righteous, one perfectly free from all Sin, for in that Sense of the Word, it is written, *There is none righteous, no not one, for we have before proved, saith St Paul, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under Sin. And if we say that we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us.* By the Righteous then are signified the true and sincere, the honest and upright in Heart, who love and fear God, and diligently keep his Commandments, and endeavour to serve and please him as far as they are able. This is the Character given by St Luke of Zacharias and his Wife Elizabeth, *they were both righteous before God, walking in all*

Luke i. 6.

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*all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless. And when the Lord appeared to Abraham, he said unto him, I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect, that is, upright and sincere, as it is rendered in the Margin of our English Bibles.*

In the eleventh Chapter to the *Hebrews* we have a long Catalogue of the Fathers, who in old Time obtained a good Report by Faith, and had this Testimony, that they pleased God, and were righteous in his Sight. These all died in Faith, not having received the Promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth. But of all the Patriarchs and Elders, who walked before God and lived by Faith in him, *Abraham* is the most eminent and illustrious, who is called in holy Scripture the Father of the Faithful, and the Friend of God, and whose Faith was counted unto him for Righteousness. And Righteousness shall be imputed to us also, if we walk in the Steps of that Faith of our Father *Abraham*. Now *Abraham* fully trusted in God and relied upon his Truth and Faithfulness in performing the Covenant between them, and therefore against Hope  
believed



Serm.  
VII.Rom. iv.  
18, 20, 21.

believed in Hope, that he might become the Father of many Nations. He staggered not at the Promise of God through Unbelief, but was strong in Faith; being fully persuaded, that what God had promised, he was able to perform. And therefore by Faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: And he that had received the Promise, offered up his only begotten Son: Of whom it was said, that in Isaac shall thy Seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the Dead; from whence also he received him in a Figure.

Heb. xi.  
17, 18, 19.

Now the Covenant between God and Abraham was this; And the Lord said unto him, I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my Covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And I will establish my Covenant between me and thee, and thy Seed after thee, in their Generations, for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy Seed after thee. Then afterwards it is added: And in thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my Voice. The Promise of God in this Covenant is summarily comprehended in these Words, to be a God unto Abraham and to his Seed after him, upon Condition of their walking before

Gen. xvii.  
1, 2.

Verse 7.

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before God, and being perfect, that is, of their being true and faithful and sincere in serving and obeying him. When therefore *Abraham* obeyed the Voice of God and approved himself sincere in his Service, he had Reason to believe God would be faithful in his Promises, and therefore he entirely relied upon God for the Performance of them. And therefore it was imputed to him for Righteousness. *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him, that raised up Jesus our Lord from the Dead.* Rom. iv. 23, 24.

For as *Abraham* was sincere in his Obedience, and entirely depended and relied upon the Power and Veracity of God in the Performance of his Promises, wherefore his Faith was reckoned to him for Righteousness; So we, that have entred into Covenant with God, who hath promised us Forgiveness of our Sins past and an Inheritance with the Saints in Light, upon Condition of our Repentance and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; if we are sincere in performing the Conditions on our Parts, we may be fully assured of God's Faithfulness in his Promises on his Part, and by this Faith in God we shall be esteemed

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esteemed Righteous in his Sight and receive the Reward of our Inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven.

And what a blessed State is this we now live in by Faith? Whereby we believe God to be just and true to his Word, and that he will certainly perform all that he hath promised; and therefore we trust in his Mercy through Christ, that all our Sins shall be forgiven us, and our sincere but weak and imperfect Obedience shall be accepted, and we ourselves treated and rewarded by him as truly righteous, and that for the sake and through the Merits and Mediation of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom, with the Father and the holy Spirit, be ascribed as is most due, all Honour and Glory, Thanksgiving and Praise, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

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SERMON

**SERMON VIII.**

**Of God no Respector of Persons.**

**ACTS X. 34. 35.**

*Of a Truth I perceive, that God is no Respector of Persons: But in every Nation, he that feareth him, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.*

**W**HEN St Peter was sent for by the devout Centurion, Cornelius, to tell him what he ought to do, the Apostle begins his Discourse with these Words of my Text, *Of a Truth I perceive, &c.*

In which Words St Peter plainly declares that God regards no Man's Person; no, nor the external Circumstances of any Person, whether he be Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, high or low, noble or ignoble, bond or free; but he ac-  
cepts

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*Of God no Respector of Persons.*

cepts of the Piety and Virtue of any Man in the World, of what Sort and Condition soever he be: Let his outward State and Condition and all other Qualifications be what they will, a godly and righteous Man is esteemed of God, and in Favour with him.

But in my Text St Peter seems to have an Eye particularly to the Pre-eminence of the *Jews* above the *Gentiles*; as the *Jews* were God's peculiar People; and enjoyed several Privileges and Advantages, which the *Gentiles* had not; but notwithstanding this Preference and Difference between them upon some Accounts, the Apostle pronounces it as a certain Truth, *that in every Nation he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him, for he is no Respector of Persons.*

In discoursing upon which Words I shall,

I. Produce several other Texts of holy Scripture to the same Purpose, either in the same Words expressing, or by direct Consequence confirming the same Truth.

II. I shall observe the Righteousness and Impartiality of God in his Dispensations and Dealing with Mankind.

III.

III. I shall give an Answer to the Objections, which may be made to this Discourse.

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I. I shall produce several other Texts of holy Scripture to the same Purpose with my Text, either in the same Words expressing, or by direct Consequence confirming the same Truth.

This Righteousness and Impartiality of God is insisted upon by *St Paul* in several Places of his Epistle to the *Romans*, and described at large in the following Words; which, after mentioning the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, he adds, *who will render to every Man according to his Deeds: To them who by patient Continuance in Well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, eternal Life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath; Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man, that doth Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile. But Glory, Honour, and Peace to every Man that worketh Good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no Respect of Persons with God. Is he a God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yea, of the Gentiles also, saith the same Apostle: and again, saith he,*  
*What*

Rom. ii.  
6—10, 29.

## Of God no Respector of Persons.

- What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under Sin. For all have sinned and come short of the Glory of God. For God hath concluded all in Unbelief, that he might have Mercy upon all. And again; But the Scripture hath concluded all under Sin, that the Promise by Faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. For the Righteousness of God is manifested which is by Faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all that believe; for there is no Difference. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, Circumcision nor Uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all. All which Passages agree with this Assertion of St Paul, that God will have all Men to be saved, and come to the Knowledge of the Truth.*
- Rom. iii. 9, 23.  
Gal. iii. 22.  
Rom. iii. 22.  
Colos. iii. 11.  
1 Tim. ii. 4.

*The Dispensation of God's Favour and Grace, both to Jews and Gentiles, by bringing them to the Knowledge of the Truth, was the Mystery St Paul speaks of, Which was kept secret since the World began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the Propbets, according to the Commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all Nations for the Obedience of Faith.*

Rom. vi. 25, 26.

*For this Cause was the Gift of the Grace of God given unto St Paul, to be made a Minister of the Gospel, to preach among the*

*the*

*the Gentiles the unsearchable Riches of Christ; that the Gentiles should be Fellow-heirs, and of the same Body, and Partakers of his Promise in Christ: To the Intent that now unto Principalities and Powers in Heavenly Places might be known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God, according to the eternal Purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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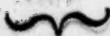
Ephes. iii.

Now from all these Portions of sacred Writ, and many more which might be added were it necessary, it evidently appears, that it was God's original Design and Intention, that all Nations should partake of the Grace and Benefit of Christ's Redemption, and that this was his eternal Purpose from the Beginning. And for this Reason our Saviour is called *a Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World.* And this was the new Song of the twenty four Elders in the Revelation, *Thou art worthy to take the Book, and to open the Seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy Blood, out of every Kindred and Tongue and People and Nation.* All which is consonant with the Words of St Peter in my Text, *Of a Truth I perceive, that God is no Respector of Persons, but in every Nation he that feareth him and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him.*

Rev. xiii.

Rev. v. 9.



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II. I shall observe the Righteousness and Impartiality of God in his Dispensations and Dealings with Mankind.

As Righteousness in general is the supreme Excellence and Perfection, so to illustrate and display the Righteousness of God was the great End and Design of the Creation; and in the continual Preservation and Government of the World. God administers all Things by the eternal and immutable Laws of Righteousness. It was God's Purpose in the Creation of the Universe to erect a Kingdom of everlasting Righteousness; and when the Devil and his Associates refused to submit to God's righteous Government; but turned Traitors and Rebels against him, and set up a Kingdom of Wickedness and Darkness in Opposition to him, God was pleased to send our blessed Saviour into the World to destroy the Works of the Devil, and to bring in everlasting Righteousness.

And when Mankind had been seduced by the Temptation of the Devil to disobey God, and to take part in the Rebellion of that Apostate Spirit, in Pity and Commiseration of Man's Sin and Misery, brought about by the insidious Artifice of the Tempter, God was pleased

ed to shew Mercy to him, by redeeming him through Faith in Christ from the Tyranny of the Devil, and the Guilt and Punishment of his Sins: But upon this indispensable Condition of Faith in Christ, and forsaking his Sins for the future,

Thus God in shewing Mercy consulted the Righteousness and Holiness of his Nature, and took care to secure the Honour and Dignity of his Government and Sacredness of his righteous Laws. So that it is evident *God is righteous in all his Ways and holy in all his Works.* <sup>Psal. cxv.</sup> To <sup>17.</sup> declare the Righteousness of God was the End God proposed in our Redemption by the most precious Blood of his dearly beloved Son, according to the express Words of St Paul in his Epistle to the Romans; *Whom, that is Jesus Christ, God hath set forth to be a Propitiation, through Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins that are past, through the Forbearance of God,* <sup>Rom. iii. 25.</sup>

Now from what has been said we may certainly infer, that as Righteousness is the primary Attribute of God, by which he directs and governs all his Operations and Proceedings, so all righteous Persons whatsoever and wheresoever are regarded and countenanced by him, impartially, and purely for their Righteousness only,

whatever their other Qualifications and Circumstances may be.

Thus we may observe among ourselves we naturally like and love and are pleased with Men of the same Temper and Disposition with ourselves, who imitate our own Behaviour and Actions, and study to resemble us in what we do, and what we take Pleasure and Delight in. And so we may reasonably conclude God is pleased to see his Creatures endeavour, according to their Capacities and Endowments, to be like him in Righteousness and true Holiness, in which principally consists the Image of God, after which they were originally made.

As God at first made Mankind upright, though by their Folly they have have sought out many Inventions, it cannot but be agreeable to him to observe them striving and struggling with their vile Affections and unruly Passions, to bring them into Subjection and Order, and make them useful and subservient to the Reason and Judgment of their Mind, for which End they were designed and planted in our Nature.

And however weak and unable the natural Man is of himself to do the Will of God, it is very reasonable to believe God will assist his sincere and honest  
En-

Endeavours after Righteousness and Holiness with his Grace and holy Spirit, so as to enable him to perform a reasonable Service of Piety and Holiness, which is a Sacrifice acceptable and well-pleasing to God. And as this is a reasonable Presumption grounded on God's Righteousness and Goodness; so it is agreeable to holy Scripture, where we read of God's Concurrence and Co-operation with good Men in the Performance of their Duty, and this both in the old and new Testaments. Thus before the Flood, *the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with Man*; which Words plainly imply the Influence and Power of the holy Spirit of God in Man, striving with his corrupt Nature. And particularly *Noah* is mentioned, who found Grace in the Eyes of the Lord; and then follows his Character, *Noah was a just Man, and perfect in his Generations, and Noah walked with God*. Thus Gen. vi. 3, 8, 9. God was pleased to accept *Melchisedeck, Job, Naaman, Cyrus*, as well as *Cornelius*, who is especially referred to in my Text. And our blessed Saviour is called *the true Light, which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World*. John i. 9. From whence we may conclude, that God's good Spirit is a

L 3                      Guide



Guide to every Man in the World, that is willing to be conducted by it.

But in the general Course of God's Providence we may observe a plain Manifestation of his Justice and Righteousness, and that he beholds with a favourable Countenance the upright and equitable Dealings of good Men. This holy *David* confirms by his own Experience, and it was a great Comfort and Encouragement to him to trust and depend upon God for Protection and Defence against all his Enemies, that *the righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, his Countenance doth behold the Upright.*

Psal. xi. 7.

This is especially to be taken Notice of in the Fate and Fortune of great States and Kingdoms, which have flourished or declined according to the Justice or Iniquity of their Administration and Government; which the wise King in his *Proverbs* remarks in these Words, *Righteousness exalteth a Nation, but Sin is a Reproach to any People.* And we may observe in the common Traffic and Commerce among Men, fair Dealing is generally the most successful, and honest Pains and Industry are the most likely Means of Prosperity, while Sloth and Idleness, Deceit and Falshood, generally end in Want and Poverty, Shame, Dis-  
grace

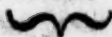
Prov. xiv.  
34.

grace and Misery. And this is the Method and Rule which God for the most part follows in his good Providence and wise Disposal of the Temporal good Things of this Life: *So that a Man shall say, Verily there is a Reward for the Righteous; verily he is a God, that judgeth in the Earth.* Psal, lviii.

III. I shall now give an Answer to the Objections, which may be made to this Discourse.

1. It may be objected, that the Righteous are not always prosperous; God sometimes seems not to favour their righteous Dealing, but suffers them to live in Trouble and Adversity and Distress. In answer to which I say, we are often mistaken and err in our Judgment and Opinion, who are righteous, and unrighteous; who are happy, and who are miserable in this Life: But I shall omit this Consideration, and desire the true State and Condition of human Life may be observed, as it is found by Experience and Matter of Fact, and as it is described and represented in holy Scripture.

Now this Life only is but a small Portion of Existence in itself, and when compared with the whole Duration of

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Man's Being it vanishes almost into Nothing. For Man was made to be immortal, and to be an Image of God's Eternity; and therefore he naturally desires and aspires after Immortality: And our present Life is but the Beginning of a future One, and a continual Progress towards a better State. Therefore our chief Business and Employment here is to fit and prepare ourselves by the Exercises of Godliness and Virtue for the Enjoyment of an heavenly Happiness. For Experience fully convinces us, that perfect Happiness is no where to be found here on Earth. We now live under Discipline, in a State of Trial and Probation, in which we must not expect our Reward before we have finished our Course, and undergone many Difficulties and Hardships, Dangers and Distresses, which the best of us may justly suffer for our manifold Offences against God. Nor does it seem to consist with the Wisdom and Righteousness of God's Government of the World immediately to reward the Virtuous, and punish the Wicked; for this would constrain Men to be virtuous rather out of Necessity than Choice,

But further, let us consider the true State of human Life, as we read it in holy Scripture.

Scripture. There Christians are said to be Strangers and Pilgrims upon Earth, travelling towards another Country: And our Life is described as a perpetual Warfare with our spiritual Enemies; and in such a State Troubles and Afflictions are no more than what may be expected, and are to be esteemed as Trials only of our Graces and Virtues, of our Faith and Hope and Trust in God; of our Patience and Fortitude and Resignation of ourselves to the Will of Heaven. And St James exhorts us to count it all Joy, when we fall into divers Temptations; knowing this, that the trying of our Faith worketh Patience. But let Patience have her perfect Work, that we may be perfect and entire. Thus we ought to think the Evils we suffer in this Life to be sent upon us to wean us from this World, and to prepare us for a better. But,

2. Do we not read of some of the the most righteous Persons, that had Heb. xi. 36, 37. Trial of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea, moreover of Bonds and Imprisonments. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the Sword: they wandered about in Sheep-skins, and Goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. But all this is no Argument, that the Righteous are not accepted with God.

For



*Of God no Respector of Persons.*

For all this God may permit to befall the Righteous for very wise and good Reasons. Thus was our blessed Saviour delivered by the determinate Counsel and Foreknowledge of God to be crucified and slain by the wicked Hands of the *Jews*. Thus were the Apostles and primitive Christians martyred for the Profession of their Faith in Christ, and for their earnest and zealous Endeavours to propagate and establish his Religion throughout the World. And St Paul very justly says, *If in this Life only we have Hope in Christ, we are of all Men most miserable*

1 Cor. xv.  
19.

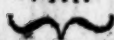
Indeed the Christian Religion in itself does not naturally tend to Misery in this Life; but in Times of Persecution, in which St Paul and the primitive Confessors and Martyrs lived, extreme Misery was the frequent Consequence of their steady Profession and public Declaration of the Truth of the Gospel of Christ. But then it must be considered, when God suffered his faithful and obedient Servants to undergo the fiery Trials of Persecution, he endued them with greater Degrees of Patience and Fortitude to bear them, and afforded them the sweet Consolations of his blessed Spirit in the midst of all their Sufferings. And the  
more

more cruel their Sufferings were in this Life good Reason they had to hope and expect to receive a higher Reward of immortal Glory and Blessedness in the next. I will only put you in mind of the Words of St Paul; *For I reckon, says he, that the Sufferings of this present Time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory, which shall be revealed in us. For our light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding, and eternal Weight of Glory. While we look not at the Things, which are seen, but at the Things, which are not seen: For the Things, which are seen, are temporal, but Things, which are not seen, are eternal. But there is no Comparison between Things temporal and Things eternal. Now Righteousness is the only Qualification for the Enjoyment of eternal Things, and therefore Righteousness is as much preferable to all other Acquisitions, as infinite exceeds finite, which bear no Proportion to one another. And therefore in all Cases and at all Times God esteems and accepts every righteous Man, whatever his outward State and Condition may be in this World. But,*

Rom. viii.  
18.

2 Cor. iv.  
17, 18.

3. A great Objection against God's Righteousness and Impartiality is raised from the imperfect and narrow Promulgation of the Gospel, when so many Nations

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Nations and People in the World sit in  
Darkness and in the Shadow of Death,  
deprived of the Light of that Day-spring,  
which from on High hath visited us.  
How many Ages and Generations of  
Men have there been in the World, who  
never knew any Thing of Christ, never  
heard of him, and therefore could not  
believe in him; whereas it is expressly  
declared, *There is none other Name under*  
*Heaven given among Men whereby we must be*  
*saved? And that through his Name, whosoever*  
*believeth in him, shall receive Remission of*  
*Sins.* Does not this argue God to be a  
Respector of Persons, and partial in his  
tender Mercy towards the Sons of Men?  
I answer it is very true, that no Man  
will be saved, but through Christ; as he  
was a Lamb slain in the Intention of God  
before the Foundation of the World; so  
he was a Sacrifice for the Sins of all  
Mankind, from the Beginning of the  
World to its last Period: And all Chris-  
tians and all *Jews* and *Gentiles*, who-  
ever they be or wheresoever they live,  
whom God may judge proper Objects  
of his Mercy, will only be saved through  
his Blood; the Virtue and Value of  
which Propitiation, though actually made  
seventeen Hundred Years ago, was de-  
signed to be of Benefit to the Salvation  
of all Men, both before that Time, as  
well as after it.

Now

*Of God no Respector of Persons.*

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Now the Terms and Conditions required of Men, that they may be saved, ought to be published and made known to them; otherwise how is it possible for Men to perform them? But they that never heard of Christ, could never know that Faith in him was required of them as a Condition of their Salvation, and therefore it is impossible for them to perform this Condition. But will it then be consistent with the Righteousness and Impartiality of God to suffer these Persons to perish for ever for Want of that Faith, which it was never in their Power to have? Rather let us consider, that as a good and pious Disposition, a sincere and honest Heart is a necessary Qualification in every one to believe in Christ; so God, who knows the Secrets of all Hearts, where-ever he finds such a Disposition in any Person, will accept that Man, and either bring him to the Knowledge and Faith in Christ, by putting it in his Power to hear the Gospel, which was the Case of *Cornelius*, particularly referred to in the Text; or should God let such a Man live and die in his Sincerity and Probity of Heart and Life, without affording him the Means and Opportunity  
of



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of believing in Christ, which God in his Prescience foresaw he would actually have done, had those Means been vouchsafed unto him; In this Case we may reasonably presume from God's Righteousness, Goodness and Impartiality, that he will take the Will for the Deed, and accept a good and honest Disposition to Believe, for actual Faith

Heb iii.  
12.

This is both an equitable and charitable Presumption. Only let us, my Brethren, who are so happy as to live in the clear Light and Knowledge of Christ, and have the Gospel brought home to our very Doors, *take heed, lest there be in any of us an evil Heart of Unbelief in departing from the living God. But contrariwise calling on the Father, who without Respect of Persons judgeth according to every Man's Work, let us pass the Time of our sojourning here in Fear. And to our Faith let us add Virtue, and to Virtue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godliness, and to Godliness Brotherly Kindness, and to Brotherly Kindness Charity. Which that we may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c. Amen.*

1 Pet. i. 17.

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## S E R M O N IX.

### Of the Prosperity of the Wicked.

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J E R E M I A H XII. I.

*Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when I plead  
with Thee: Yet let me talk with Thee  
of thy Judgments: Wherefore doth the  
Way of the Wicked prosper? Wherefore are  
all they happy, that deal very treacherously?*

**R**ighteousness and Equity are Vir-  
tues so admirable, so excellent in  
themselves, that it is impossible  
to have any true or worthy Conception  
of God Almighty, his Nature and At-  
tributes, who is the best and most per-  
fect Being we can conceive, without  
ascribing to him these Excellencies and  
Perfections, which are the Beauty and  
Glory

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Glory of the Deity. Hence all civilized Nations, both *Jewish* and *Pagan*, however different in their religious Adoration and Worship, have unanimously agreed in the Belief and Acknowledgment of the divine Justice and Equity; as might be proved by many Testimonies out of their several Authors, and is confirmed by their general Custom and Practice of appealing to God, as a Witness and Judge of their mutual Compacts and Promises, and by their Oaths, by which they frequently obliged themselves in their various Transactions and Dealings with one another. But notwithstanding this Agreement and Consent of Mankind in generally ascribing to God Justice and Righteousness as most excellent Perfections; yet the unequal Administrations of the divine Providence in this World, in afflicting and grieving frequently the Righteous, and bestowing signal Favours and Kindness on the Wicked, have been great Stumbling-blocks to many good Men, which have made them sometimes even to question God's Justice and Righteousness. Several Instances we have recorded in holy Scripture among the *Jewish* Nation, of *Jacob*, and *Job*, and *David*, and many of the Prophets, who have complained of the unequal Distribution

butions of the divine Favours and Blessings in this Life; and in particular the Prophet *Jeremiab*, in the Words of my Text, when he lays it down for a certain Truth, that God is righteous; yet he wants to be better satisfied about this Question, Wherefore are the Wicked prosperous? *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when, &c.*

The holy Prophet was assured, God would be found righteous in all his Doings, when the Cause came to be tried and fully heard; and therefore he confesses the divine Righteousness, as a first Principle, when he began to reason and argue about the Proceedings of God with the Sons of Men; imitating herein the divine *Psalmist*, *Who acknowledgeth his own Transgression and Sin, that God might be justified, when he speaketh, and clear when he judgeth.* Psal. li. 4. But yet he begs God to indulge him this Liberty, to talk with him of his Judgments, and to propose an Objection, which might seem to impeach God of Injustice, namely, Why are the Ungodly so happy? Why are so many Favours and Benefits conferred on the Profane and Wicked, if God be so righteous a Judge, and executeth his Judgments with the exactest Justice, Righteousness and Holiness?



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In answer to the Question, I shall observe the Method laid down by the Prophet in the Words of my Text, namely,

I. Discourse of the Righteousness and Holiness of God in general.

II. Offer some Reasons and Arguments in Vindication of the divine Justice and Holiness, notwithstanding this Objection.

I. I will discourse of the Righteousness and Holiness of God in general. By the Righteousness and Holiness of God I understand the Rectitude and Purity of the divine Nature, the Conformity of the Mind and Will of God to the eternal and immutable Nature and Reason of Things or of their Ideas, and the infinite Distance and Separation of the Deity from all Moral Evil and Sin and Vice; whereby God is naturally disposed and inclined to favour and love Virtue and Goodness, and at the same Time to hate and abhor all Sin and Wickedness: So that Holiness and Righteousness comprehend all the Moral Excellencies and Perfections of the divine Nature; and in this Latitude I shall Discourse of these Attributes at present. And,

1. I will consider what Apprehensions and Notions of God we ought to form in our Minds from the Light of Nature or our natural Reason.

2. Examine how consistent and agreeable our natural Apprehensions of him are with the Word of God, or divine Revelation.

1. I will consider what Apprehensions and Notions of God we ought to form in our Minds from the Light of Nature, or our natural Reason.

The general Notion Men conceive of God, upon a serious and just Reflection concerning the divine Nature, is the Idea of the most excellent Being, possessed of all possible Perfections, and enjoying all the Good, that is to be found scattered and dispersed among his Creatures, and infinitely more than any Creature possibly can have. And this Good is either of the same Kind with that in the Creature, but in the highest Degree in God, or it is of a different Kind, but of a Nature infinitely more perfect in him. This Idea naturally arises in our Minds, from the Consideration, that God is the first Cause and Author of all Things, by whom they were first made, and from whom they derived all the Powers

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and Faculties they are endued with. But now the highest Excellence we can imagine in any Being is the most perfect and absolute Reason, which is the Nature and Essence of God, and the supreme Excellence of the Deity.

And as God Almighty is the most rational Being we can conceive; so he conforms all his Actions to the purest Reason, and his Providence and Government of the World is conducted with the exactest Righteousness; and his Rule over rational Creatures is always guided and directed by the eternal and immutable Laws and Reasons of Good and Evil, the truest Holiness, and most consummate Wisdom. And herein chiefly consists the Dignity and Glory of the divine Majesty.

But further, from this visible Creation of the World, it plainly appears that God must be a Being of infinite Power and Goodness, as well as Wisdom. And as the great Creator of the World is an intelligent and omniscient Being, he perceives and knows the true Nature of all Things, their several Properties and Proportions, their different Respects and Relations to each other, and their mutual Agreement or Disagreement; and as he

he is the most rational and wise, omnipotent, self-sufficient and independent Being, he will always chuse to act according to those eternal Reasons, which result from the Nature of Things, or of their Ideas.

The Perception of Truth and Falshood, Virtue and Vice, is necessary and unavoidable to an intelligent and attentive Mind : and the Approbation and Love of Truth and Virtue, and the Dislike and Hatred of Falshood and Evil, is as natural to a purely rational Being. And therefore God Almighty, who understands and knows infallibly what is Good, and what is Evil, and who is the most perfectly rational Being, will very certainly chuse to do always what is right and good, because it is agreeable to him ; and as certainly avoid doing at any Time what is wrong and evil, because it is displeasing and hateful to his divine Nature. That is, God Almighty naturally loves Righteousness, Holiness and Justice, and has a natural Aversion to Unrighteousness, Wickedness and Injustice.

And thus righteous and just the Heathens always conceived God to be. And therefore *Plato* asserts, that God is in no Respect unjust, but most righteous, as



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far as it is possible. So *Seneca* tells us, that the Gods are neither capable of receiving an Injury, nor of doing any Thing that is unjust. And to the same Purpose the great Emperor and Philosopher *Antoninus* and *Tully* likewise.

And how consistent all this is with divine Revelation will plainly appear.

2. When *Abraham* interceded with God in the Destruction of *Sodom* for saving the few righteous Persons, that should be found in that wicked City, he pleads with God his Justice after this Manner. *Wilt thou also destroy the Righteous with the Wicked? Peradventure there be fifty Righteous within the City, wilt thou also destroy, and not spare the Place for the fifty Righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the Righteous with the Wicked, and that the Righteous should be as the Wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the Earth do Right?* Which negative Question amounts to a direct and strong Affirmation, that the Judge of all the Earth will most certainly do Right. Thus, *The Lord is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works.* And in the Epistle to the Romans, *What shall we say then? Is there Unrighteousness with God? God forbid.* But it would be endless to recite all the Passages in holy Scripture to this Purpose: From a very little

Psal. cxlvii.

17.

Rom. ix.

14.

little Inspection into those sacred Books a Man may be assured and with the Psalmist say, *Verily there is a Reward for the Righteous, doubtless there is a God that judgeth the Earth.*

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*Psal. lviii.*

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But if there be this Reward for the Righteous, if God judge the Earth, *Wherefore*, in the Words of my Text, *are the Wicked prosperous? Wherefore are all they happy, that deal very treacherously?* Which brings me to my second Head of Discourse.

II. To offer some Reasons and Arguments in Vindication of the Righteousness and Holiness of God, notwithstanding this Objection.

1. The unequal Distribution of the divine Favours and Benefits is no Objection to the Righteousness and Justice of God, because we ourselves and all that we have and enjoy are God's own; *for he hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture.* And therefore he may govern and deal with us, as he thinks best. God gives us Breath and Life and all Things, and may bestow his Goodness and loving Kindness in what Measure, and after what Manner he pleases, and hath a Right and Propriety in his own

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to give or take away any Blessing, whenever he thinks fit. And therefore it can be no Injustice in God to deal with his Creatures in any Way according to his Wisdom. For every Person claims a Right to do what he will with his own. And while the Mercies we receive far exceed the Evils we suffer, we ought to be so far from complaining, that we ought to be thankful and to bless God for his Goodness and Kindness.

We are the Clay, God is the Potter, we are all the Work of his Hands, and shall the Thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter Power over the Clay, of the same Lump to make one Vessel unto Honour, and another to Dishonour? Where therefore is the Injustice in God, if he hath not made us as glorious Beings, as some others are? Or what Reason have we to murmur, if we differ from one another in Glory? If we have not all the same excellent Endowments of Mind, nor the same Beauty and Comeliness of Body? If we have not all the same Estates, Riches, and Honours? If we do not all enjoy the same Portion of good Things in this Life? All these Things are the Lot of the Wicked as well as the Righteous; nay, sometimes the

the Wicked enjoy a greater Share of them than the Righteous ; But still this is no Injustice in God, because he may justly do what he will with his own, and is accountable to none for what he does.

Besides, there is not one of us, who does not enjoy the divine Bounty and Goodness in much greater Abundance than we deserve at God's Hands. When *Job* under his great Afflictions was at a Loss to account for the Evils he suffered from the divine Hand, God vindicates his Justice by shewing his Sovereignty over all his Works ; which soon silenced *Job*, and made him humble himself in the Sight of God. But if *Job* in all his Misery could not accuse God of Injustice, much less Reason have any of us upon Account of our Sufferings to do it.

It is true, *Promotion cometh neither from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South ; but God is the Judge, he putteth down one, and setteth up another.* But whosoever looks upon these Proceedings of God with an evil Eye, let him consider how unworthy he is of the least of the divine Favours, and what Mercies God heaps upon him every Day, notwithstanding all his Sins and Provocations ; and consequently with what Gratitude and Thankfulness he ought to receive the

*Psal. lxxv.  
6, 7.*



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the divine Blessings : So unreasonable is it to impute Injustice to God in the Disposal of his Favours, when every Benefactor thinks it but just to confer his Benefits on whom he pleases.

All this is unanswerable, and sufficient to clear the Justice of God in the unequal Distribution of the good Things of this Life. But I explained the Righteousness of God in a larger Sense, than his bare Justice, so as to be the same with his Holiness, which is the perfect Rectitude of the divine Nature, his Love of and Complacency in all Virtue and Goodness, and his Hatred and Aversion to all Sin and Vice ; which yet seem to be inconsistent with the Administrations of the divine Providence here below, notwithstanding what I have hitherto said. And therefore further to justify the Righteousness of God in his Dealing with Mankind in this Life, let it be considered,

2. That we are very incompetent Judges of the divine Providence in the Government and Appointment of the Affairs of this World. As the Creation of the World was a Work of infinite Wisdom and Goodness ; so the Preservation and Government of it is managed with as great Counsel and Kindness. But we are very ignorant of the

the Manner how God created the World at first out of Nothing, we have no Notion of it, because it is above our Apprehension: Nor do we know how God separated the several Parts of Matter from each other, and formed each particular Body; and after the Formation of these Bodies we understand as little how God adjusted their several Motions, and put them in such regular Order, so as to compose this beautiful Frame and Fabric of the World. We see indeed great Wisdom and Design in the whole System of the Universe, but we know not the perfect Nature of any one individual Creature in it: The smallest Insect, the least Particle of Matter we can discern will puzzle the greatest Philosopher living to give a true and full Account of its Nature and Qualities. And much less are we able to account for immaterial Beings, to comprehend the Nature and Essence of immortal Spirits.

Now if we be thus ignorant of the Workmanship of God in the Creation of the World, why should we imagine ourselves to be capable of knowing the Ways and Methods by which God preserves and governs the World. Preservation differs from Creation only in this, that the one is the Production of Something

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thing out of Nothing by an Almighty Power, the other the Continuation of the same Thing in Being by the same Almighty Power; so that both the one and the other are Acts of the divine Omnipotence: And the Direction and Disposal of all Events requires as much Wisdom and Counsel, as to endue Causes with their proper Virtues and Qualities to produce their natural Effects. And therefore as we know not the Works of God in the Creation of the World, so we must be content to be ignorant of his Ways in the Administration of it.

Thus much to shew, that we are incapable of forming a perfect Judgment of the divine Providence in general. As to what relates to our particular Case of the unequal Distributions of God's Goodness to wicked Men; we shall soon perceive, how incompetent Judges we are as to this Matter, when we consider how ignorant we are, who are really so good, and who so very wicked, who are so very happy, and who so miserable, as at present they may seem to be.

How easily we may be deceived in the Virtue and Goodness of one another, a little Experience of the World will convince us, when so many Artifices and Pretences are made use of to appear  
righteous,

righteous, so many Disguises put on to conceal Wickedness; when such Dissimulation and Hypocrisy are practised to impose upon God, were it possible, as well as Man. But however we may be mistaken in our Opinion, God cannot err in his Judgment, who knows the Secrets of all Hearts, and sees through all Pretences, and distinguishes the real Saint from the private Sinner.

Again, there are many wicked Men in the Esteem of the World, who have their particular Virtues and good Qualities. But we are generally apt to be too censorious of one another, and love to talk more of the Failings and Miscarriages of others than of their good Deeds, though in our own Praise and Commendation we can harangue incessantly. But God remarks every single Virtue, and will reward every righteous Act, though in Persons in other Respects very vicious.

Further, we generally esteem the Rich and Honourable contented and happy, but a very little Consideration will shew us the contrary. For why are the high and mighty Ones so restless and uneasy, continually aspiring after greater Riches and Honour and Power, and know no End of their Ambition? But in all their Affluence and all their Mirth and Pleasure



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sure who can tell what Trouble and Uneasiness, what Remorse and secret Smitings of Conscience they privately undergo? Many of them we may plainly perceive are very far from being happy.

Once more, we frequently err in accounting the Poor and Indigent very miserable. For a Man's Happiness does not consist in the Abundance of his Riches. The Little which a good Man hath is more than the Plenty of the Wicked. *But Godliness with Contentment is great Gain.* And how little will satisfy Nature the same Apostle assures us, when

1 Tim. vi.  
6.1 Tim. vi.  
1, 9.

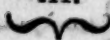
*having Food and Raiment he exhorts us to be therewith content. But they that will be rich, saith he, fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition.*

Upon the whole, let us observe how easily we may be mistaken in our Judgments about the Condition and Happiness of good and bad Men with respect to their Circumstances in this World; and therefore how cautious we ought to be how we censure the divine Providence upon that Account.

3. And lastly, As in the Creation of the World though we be not able to comprehend the Formation of the several Bodies in it, nor the Springs of Motion,  
by

by which it continues in Being; yet we see such Wisdom and Contrivance, such Beauty and Harmony in the Whole taken together, notwithstanding the little seeming Irregularities in some of its Parts, as to make us admire and extol the Counsel and Goodness of its great Founder; so in God's Providence over the World, though his Wisdom be unsearchable, and his Ways past finding out in some of his Dispensations, yet we see in the general Course of Things such Success for the most part attending Virtue and Industry, and such Misery the usual Consequence of Vice and Sloth; such Hopes and Encouragements given to Goodness, and such Checks to Sin, as sufficiently shew the Righteousness and Holiness of God's Government, and his Favour and Love to good Men in general; though some particular righteous Persons may be afflicted, and some Wicked prosperous. And this is sufficient to vindicate the Righteousness of God, that in his common Dealing with Men, Vice is discouraged and discountenanced, and Virtue rewarded, though there may be some Instances in the World to the contrary.

And as to the Inequality of the divine Administrations towards some particular  
good

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good or wicked Men, let us observe the Method of God's Government of the World, and the true State of human Life. It is plain, God's Government of Mankind is an Exercise of Discipline and Trial of the Sons of Men, and not a final Recompence to them according to their Virtues or Vices. And in a State of Discipline and Probation it is not necessary to punish wicked Men immediately upon the Commission of any Sin: This would be inconsistent with the Patience and Forbearance and Mercy of God towards Sinners, not to allow them Time and Opportunity for Repentance and Amendment of Life.

Nor is it requisite presently to reward good Men, this might make them virtuous, not so much out of Choice as Necessity, when they were sure their Virtue would meet with its immediate Reward. And therefore it must be left to God when to reward or punish good or wicked Men, either in part in this World, or in full in the next: When all Things will be adjusted, and we abundantly convinced of the Righteousness and Holiness of God in all his Proceedings. Then we shall clearly see through all the mysterious Passages of Providence, and admire the Righteousness, Justice and Equity

*Of the Prosperity of the Wicked.*

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Equity of God in all his Dispensations towards the Children of Men; when all the seeming present Inequalities of the divine Government will disappear; *when the Righteous shall shine forth as the Sun in the Firmament; and the Wicked shall be cast down into Hell;* to the Glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the holy Ghost. To which blessed Trinity be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour and Glory and Worship for ever and ever.  
*Amen.*



N

SERMON





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## S E R M O N X.

Of being renewed in the Spirit of  
our Mind.

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EPHESIANS IV. 23.

*And be renewed in the Spirit of your Mind.*

**T**HE Apostle in the Beginning of Serm.  
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this Chapter exhorts the *Ephesians*  
to walk worthy of the Vocation Ver. 1, 2,  
*wherewith they were called, with all Lowli-  
ness and Meekness, with Long-suffering, for-  
bearing one another in Love, endeavouring to  
keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of  
Peace.* And proceeding in several Verses  
following to enforce his Exhortation by  
many Arguments and Considerations, he  
admonishes them, *that they henceforth walk*  
*not as other Gentiles walk in the Vanity of* Ver. 17.  
N 2their

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Serm. *their Mind*: telling them on the contrary

X. *their Duty, But ye have not so learned*  
Ver. 20, *Christ. If so be that ye have heard him, and*

21,—24. *have been taught by him, as the Truth is in*  
*Jesus; That ye put off concerning the former*  
*Conversation, the old Man, which is corrupt*  
*according to the deceitful Lusts: And be re-*  
*newed in the Spirit of your Mind. And that*  
*ye put on the new Man, which after God is*  
*created in Righteousness and true Holiness.*

I have rehearsed these Verses of the  
Context, as they afford some Light to  
the true Understanding of the Words of  
the Text, *Be ye renewed in the Spirit of your*  
*Mind.* In discoursing upon which Words  
I shall,

I. Endeavour to give you the true  
Sense and Meaning of them. And then,

II. Consider the Duty incumbent upon  
us, and contained in them.

I. I shall endeavour to give you the  
true Sense and Meaning of the Text.

1. What we are to understand by the  
*Spirit of your Mind.*

2. What is implied in the Word *re-*  
*newed.*

1st, What we are to understand by  
the Words, *Spirit of your Mind.*

By

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By the *Spirit* in this Place may be understood the divine Spirit, the Aids and Assistances of God's Grace, instilled into our Minds, and co-operating with us in all our pious Thoughts and virtuous Actions. Serm.  
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Or by the *Spirit of your Mind* may be meant only the Mind itself, or our Spiritual Mind; the Word Spirit being joined with the Mind by Way of Explication, to signify the divine Nature and Essence of the Mind.

But the best and true Interpretation of the Words is, I think, to understand by them the Affection and Disposition, the Temper and Inclination of the Mind, whereby it approves and loves and delights in all Virtue and Godliness of living. And that this may the better appear to be the true and proper Sense of the Words, it is to be observed, that as by the Word *Spirit* in holy Scripture is often meant the divine Spirit, or holy Ghost, the third Person in the ever blessed Trinity; so by a Metonymie, (an usual Manner of Speech, when by the Cause are denoted the genuine Effects and Properties of that Cause,) so here in these Words are signified by the Spirit, the Gifts and Graces of the divine Spirit; most especially the Endowment and



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Grace of Love, by which Virtue I mean an Affection and Disposition of Mind to be pleased and delighted in the Study and Contemplation and Practice of Truth and Righteousness and all Goodness.

And this Exposition of the Words is agreeable to those immediately following them: *And that ye put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness, or Holiness of Truth:* Which Words both suggest and confirm the Sense I have given of the Word Spirit, in my Text. But this leads me to consider,

2dly, What is implied in the Word *renewed*.

By the Word *renewed* may be signified constant and fresh Supplies of Spiritual Grace, to strengthen and enable us daily to proceed and make a continual Progress in all Virtue and Godliness. This Sense the Words of the Text, considered separately and apart from the Context, will fairly bear. But when we examine into their Meaning with Relation to the preceeding and subsequent Verses, they will import a higher and more extensive Meaning; and for our better understanding them, let us consider a parallel Text in St Paul's

Col. iii. 10. *Epistle to the Colossians; And have put on the*  
the

*Of being renewed in the Spirit of our Mind.*

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*the new Man, which is renewed in Knowledge, after the Image of him that created him. Which Words very nearly agree with these, And be ye renewed in the Spirit of your Mind; and that ye put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness.*

We may observe, that in both Epistles there is mention made of the *new* and *old* Man, and in both the new Man is set in Opposition and made contrary to the old; So that by the Account and Description of the old Man, we may come to a fuller Understanding of what is meant by the new Man. In the Epistle to the *Ephesians*, in the Verse immediately before my Text, we read; *That ye put off concerning your former Conversation the old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful Lusts.* Where by the old Man is plainly signified the corrupt Nature and Affections, the vicious Habits and wicked Practices of the *Gentiles*. All which are more particularly set down by St Paul in his Epistle to the *Colossians*; *Mortify therefore your Members, which are upon Earth, Fornication, Uncleaness, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiscence, and Covetousness, which is Idolatry. For which Things sake the Wrath of God cometh on the Children of Disobedience.* In the which ye

Col. iii. 5,  
6, 7, 8, 9.

*Of being renewed in the Spirit of our Mind.*  
 also walked some time, when ye lived in them.  
 But now you also put off all these, Anger,  
 Wrath, Malice, Blasphemy, filthy Communi-  
 cation out of your Mouth. Lie not one to ano-  
 ther, seeing that ye have put off the old Man  
 with his Deeds. The old Man here un-  
 doubtedly signifies the wicked Lives of  
 the *Colossians* before their Conversion to  
 Christianity; and on the contrary, there-  
 fore, the new Man must imply the pure  
 and holy Conversation required of all  
 true Christians.

This is certainly a good and true In-  
 terpretation of the Phrase, *new Man*,  
 and agreeable to the Description of the  
 new Man in the next Verse to my Text;  
*And that ye put on the new Man, which  
 after God is created in Righteousness and true  
 Holiness.* Which Words correspond with  
 the like Expression in the second Chapter  
 and tenth Verse of this Epistle: *For we are  
 his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto  
 good Works, which God hath before ordained,  
 that we should walk in them.*

But the Word *renewed*, in my Text,  
 joined with the Expression, *the new Man*,  
 in the Verse following, which is said,  
*after God to be created in Righteousness and  
 true Holiness*, intimates and suggests to  
 us a further and higher Meaning, than  
 what we have hitherto taken Notice of;  
 and

and points out and directs us to the Consideration of the Image and Likeness of God, after which Man was at first and originally created: As we read in the first Chapter of *Genesis*: *And God said, Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeness.* This Sense is consonant to the Words in the *Colossians*, *And have put on the new Man, which is renewed in Knowledge, after the Image of him that created him.* Both Texts seem plainly to refer to the Image of God in Man at his first Formation. And with this agree the Words, *We are his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which God hath before* Eph. ii. 10. *ordained, that we should walk in them.* From all which we may learn wherein the Image of God in *Adam* at his Creation did chiefly and principally consist, namely, in Righteousness and true Holiness, or Holiness of Truth.

But as it is a Matter of great Consequence and Importance to know wherein the Image of God in Man at his Creation is most especially to be placed, and as it tends to a fuller Understanding of the Words of my Text, I shall beg leave to enter into a more explicit and exact Disquisition about it.

The great Apostle, in the Beginning of this Epistle, breaks out in sublime Expressions,



Serm.  
X.Ephes. i.  
3, 4.Luke i.  
74, 75.

fions; *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us in heavenly Places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him, before the Foundation of the World, that we should be holy, and without Blame before him in Love.* From which Words we may observe, that in the Beginning, before the Foundation of the World, God laid the whole Plan and Scheme of our Redemption through Christ; the great Design of which was, *that we being delivered out of the Hands of our Enemies, might serve him without Fear, in Holiness and Righteousness before him all the Days of our Life, or that we should be holy, and without Blame before him in Love.* So that Righteousness and true Holiness were originally and at first, in the Will and Counsel of God, pre-determined to be the End and Design of the Gospel of Christ Jesus. But then we must observe and take Care, that our Practice of Truth and Righteousness be founded upon a true and right Principle, a Spirit of Love and Obedience to God and his Commands, the best and most righteous Being we can conceive.

This Spirit of Love to God and Goodness, this Affection and Disposition of Mind, is what God principally regards in all our Actions. This is truly a  
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Communion with God and his holy Spirit, and a proper Participation of the divine Nature. *For we are his Workmanship, saith St Paul, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.*

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God himself being the great Author, the Spring and Fountain of all Truth and Righteousness, must naturally like and love these Virtues in all his Creatures, as far as they are capable of imitating and resembling him therein. And herein principally consisted the Image and Likeness of God in our first Parents, while they continued innocent; to recover and regain which ought to be the chief Study and Employment of all their Posterity.

The Image of God indeed, in a large and full Sense and Acceptation, contains many Properties of the divine Nature, as far as we finite Creatures are able to imitate the infinite and glorious and adorable Perfections of our Creator. Thus the Power and Dominion of God over his Creatures, is particularly taken Notice of as a Superiority and Dignity peculiarly conferred upon *Adam* for his Imitation in his Rule over his Fellow-creatures. *And God said, Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeness: and let*  
them

Gen. i 26.

*Of being renewed in the Spirit of our Mind.*  
*them have Dominion over the Fish of the Sea,*  
*and over the Fowl of the Air, and over the*  
*Cattle, and over all the Earth, and over*  
*every creeping Thing that creepeth upon the*  
*Earth.*

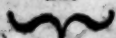
Here the Image of God in *Adam* is described, as consisting eminently in Man's Dominion over all the Creatures upon Earth. In the *Wisdom* of Solomon we read, *that God created Man to be immortal, and made him to be an Image of his own Eternity.* Where the divine Image is placed in Man's Immortality. In other Places of Scripture God's Image and Likeness in Man is delineated by Knowledge and Wisdom; but most frequently in the New Testament we are exhorted to imitate God in the Moral Attributes and Perfections of his Nature: In which after a singular and peculiar manner all good Men most truly and properly resemble the Deity. And indeed for this Reason are we required and commanded to be like God in Holiness and Righteousness, as these are the most illustrious and distinguishing Characters of the Deity, in which the Beauty and Glory of the divine Nature most eminently consist, and in which holy and righteous Persons only are, or can be truly and properly Imitators of God, as dear  
 Chil-

Children; by which Marks and Signatures they as truly and justly resemble their heavenly Father, and manifest their divine Original and Extraction, as the Offspring of our earthly Progenitors do, by their proper Features and Lineaments, bear the Image and Likeness of their natural Parents.

Some of the natural Attributes of God inanimate Creatures are capable of representing, as the Rocks and Mountains exhibit an Idea of God's Strength and Immutability; and wicked Men and evil Spirits have several Degrees of Power and Understanding, wherein they carry a Shadow of the divine Omnipotence and Omniscience. But none but holy Men and good Spirits can imitate God in his Moral Attributes and Perfections, as his Righteousness and Goodness, his Truth and Justice and Mercy, &c. as these Excellencies and Properties are peculiar and only belong to God and his Children. And therefore the Image and Likeness of God in Man is most especially to be discerned in the Exercise of these Graces and Virtues.

The natural Attributes of God we may imitate in our Actions, but as these are liable to be perverted and abused by us to very mischievous and wicked Purposes  
and





and Designs, (particularly the Power we may have, in which there is some Resemblance of divine Power;) so we do not find in Scripture these Perfections prescribed to our Imitation; but the Moral Excellencies of God we are frequently exhorted and encouraged to aspire after, and endeavour to partake of, as they are the greatest Improvement and Advancement our Nature is capable of, exalting us to a Participation of the divine Nature: And for this Reason are they set before us in holy Scripture to be imitated and transcribed by us in our Life and Practice.

But to denominate our Actions truly Good, so that we may be justly termed Followers of God, they must not only be materially good, but all the Circumstances of them must be right and true, any one of which, if it prove Evil, like the dead Fly in the Apothecary's Ointment, mars and spoils all the rest, and causeth the whole Action to partake of its Malignity, and changeth its Nature. So that it is not sufficient to be Good, and to do Good in some Respects, but to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, we must endeavour to be good in all Respects.

But

But there is one Circumstance very Serm.  
X.  
carefully to be observed by us in all

our Actions, which is chiefly regarded by God in all we do, which is the Motive and Principle we act upon, and that ought to be a Principle of Love to God first and chiefly, and secondly and subordinately to one another for God's sake.

*Let all Things be done with Charity or Love,* 1 Cor. xvi.  
*saith St Paul.* God is said to be Love by St 14.  
*John,* which is the very Nature and Es- 1 John iv. 8.

sence of the Godhead. And this is an Affection in God to be always pleased and delighted with the Contemplation and Practice of all Truth and Righteousness. And as this Affection chiefly constitutes the Glory and Blessedness of the divine Nature; so our Excellency and Perfection principally consist in such a Temper and Disposition. Thus was our Nature inclined and disposed originally before the Sin of our first Parents: This Spirit of their Mind did they receive from God, when he at first created them. And in the new Creation in Christ Jesus, the End and Design of the Operation of God upon our Hearts by his holy Spirit, is to renew this Spirit of our Mind in us, which through the Lust of the Flesh and the Power and Deceitfulness of the Spirit, which now  
worketh

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2 Cor. v.

17.

Gal. vi.

15.

Ephes.

ii. 20.

worketh in the Children of Disobedience, is quenched and stifled in their impure and corrupt Hearts and Minds. But St Paul saith, *If any Man be in Christ, he is a new Creature.* In Christ Jesus neither Circumcision availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature. *For we are his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.*

Thus are we to be *born again of Water and of the Spirit, otherwise we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* This is the new Birth of a Christian. For when by our corrupt Nature and vicious Habits we were the Children of Wrath, we are hereby made the Children of Grace. *For we ourselves also, saith St Paul, were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers Lusts and Pleasures, living in Malice and Envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the Kindness and Love of God our Saviour toward Man appeared, not by Works of Righteousness, which we have done, but according to his Mercy he saved us by the Washing of Regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost.*

Tit. iii. 3.

As by our Regeneration and the Renovation of our Nature by the holy Ghost we are put into a State of Salvation through

through Christ, and are assisted and enabled by the divine Spirit to perform Works pleasing and acceptable to God through Christ, which is the Way to recover the Grace and Favour of God, that our first Parents by their Disobedience lost; so by being renewed in the Spirit of our Mind, we regain that Frame and Constitution of Mind, that Love and Affection to God and Goodness, which they were originally endued with, and might have for ever enjoyed, had they continued innocent and obedient.

*Adam*, as he at first was formed by the Hands of God, was upright and innocent, naturally inclined to Goodness, approved of Virtue, and liked and loved Truth and Righteousness; in which Disposition and Affection of Mind he resembled and bore the Image of his Maker, and was qualified for Converse and Communion with him; but no sooner did he lose his Integrity and Innocence, but he was averse to Virtue and Goodness, and shunned and avoided God's Sight and Presence, was afraid of the divine Majesty, being conscious of his Sin and Guilt, by which he had incurred God's Displeasure, and the Punishment threatened and denounced against him, and

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became





became the Subject and Slave of the Devil; in which State and Condition he had for ever continued, had not God in Judgment remembered Mercy, and contrived the Means of his Redemption through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And we still retain the Wounds and Bruises, we received by *Adam's Fall*. We are all sensible of an Estrangement and Alienation of Mind from God, either through the Lusts of the Flesh, or the Pride and Vanity of Life, or the deceitful Insinuations and Suggestions of the Devil; and should the best of us *say, we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us*. From whence we see the Necessity of Repentance and Humbleness of Mind, and how careful and diligent we ought to be to excite and cherish in our Breasts the Love of God and of each other; and to endeavour by all Means to renew a right Spirit within us. Which brings me,

II. To consider the Duty incumbent upon us, and contained in the Words of my Text, *Be renewed in the Spirit of your Mind. Be ye Followers of God as dear Children*. Let the like Affection and Disposition, the like Mind and Will, as are in our heavenly Father, rule and reign in  
your

your Breasts. Let all your Things be done with Charity. Let the Love of Truth and Righteousness, and all Virtue, be the Spring and Principle of your Designs and Actions. Let your Love and Affection be first and principally placed and fixed upon God, the best and most perfect Being we can conceive; and as far as Men imitate and resemble God in Righteousness and true Holiness, let them share in your Esteem and Affection. Let Virtue and Goodness, Purity and Temperance, be the Crown and Ornament, the Praise and Glory of your Lives. And because the Virtues and good Actions of the best of us are intermixed with an Alloy of Frailty and Infirmary, Miscarriages and Offences, be ye cloathed with Humility and Meekness, Patience and Forbearance and Forgiveness; *and let all Bitterness and Wrath, and Anger and Clamour, and Evil-speaking be put away from you, with all Malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's Sake hath forgiven you.* Such ought to be the Spirit, the Turn and Temper, the Complection and Constitution of our Mind. Thus shall we best manifest our Love to God by keeping his Commandments, and prove ourselves to be endued with his

Ephes. iv.  
31, 32.

196 *Of being renewed in the Spirit of our Mind.*

Serm. holy Spirit, and to have put on Christ ;

X. *For the Fruit of the Spirit is in all Good-*  
 Eph. v. 9. *ness and Righteousness and Truth.* Here-  
 by know we the Spirit of Truth and  
 the Spirit of Error.

Eph. 4. 1. *Beloved, believe not every Spirit, saith*  
*St John ; but try the Spirits, whether they*  
*are of God ; because many false Prophets are*  
*gone out into the World. By their Fruits ye*  
 Matt. vii *shall know them, saith our blessed Saviour.*

16. This is the only Mark God hath given  
 us, whereby to know, whether we our-  
 selves or others are led by the Spirit.  
 For it is not a sufficient Proof, that we  
 are inspired of God, and influenced by  
 his holy Spirit, to entertain such Con-  
 ceits and Imaginations in our Heads ;  
 or to be in Raptures and Extasies, and  
 transported with sudden Fits and Starts  
 of Devotion : no, nor would it be a full  
 and satisfactory Evidence, that we are  
 assisted by a divine Power, should we  
 be able to shew Signs and Wonders, or  
 even work Miracles in Christ's Name,  
 unless in the Cause of true Religion and  
 Virtue ; for wicked Men and evil Spirits  
 may do so to promote Iniquity and the  
 Kingdom of Darknes. And this we are  
 assured of by our blessed Saviour himself  
 in these Words ; *Not every one, that saith*  
*unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the*  
 King-

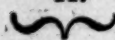
*Kingdom of Heaven: Many will say to me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy Name? and in thy Name cast out Devils? and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: Depart from me ye that work Iniquity.* The only Way Matt. vii. 20, 21, 22, 23. to be secure from Error and Imposture, either from our own vain and deluded Fancies, or from the Sleight of Man, or the Working of Satan, is to look into our own selves, and to observe the Thoughts and Intentions of our Hearts, and according as we find these to be, so to judge of our own State and Condition; and to try and examine the Pretences of others by their good or bad Actions.

Our Duty to God; our Neighbour, and ourselves, is our reasonable Service; by which Rule if we act, and upon a right Principle, a Spirit of Love and Obedience to God, we shall prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of our heavenly Father, and be Followers of him as dear Children. A Love of God and his Righteousness is the right Spirit, which we ought to pray to be renewed in us, as a Condition and Qualification absolutely necessary to make us happy; to make us like the blessed Angels and God himself.



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By such an Affection we shall anticipate and foretaste the Joys of Heaven, while we live here on Earth, and be duly prepared for the full Enjoyment of the beatific Vision ; *When we all with open Face, beholding as in a Glass the Glory of the Lord, shall be changed into the same Image* 2 Cor. i. *from Glory to Glory.* Which God of his infinite Mercy grant for the Sake of the Son of his Love, Jesus Christ the Righteous ; to whom, with the Father and blessed Spirit, be all Honour and Glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*



28 SE60

SERMON

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## S E R M O N XI.

Of the Assistance of God's Spirit  
communicated to all Mankind.

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J O H N VI. 45.

*They shall be all taught of God.*

**W**HEN the *Jews* murmured at our blessed Saviour, because he said, *I am the Bread, which came down from Heaven*, signifying thereby the spiritual Doctrine he came down from Heaven to teach them; to silence their Murmuring he tells them, *No Man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me, draw him: and I will raise him up at the last Day.* And to confirm this Truth, he adds, *It is written in the Prophets, And they shall all be taught of God.* Which Words, as they are found in the Pro-  
phcy

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Isa. liy.

13, 14.

phesy of *Isaiab* run thus, *And all thy Children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the Peace of thy Children. In Righteousness shalt thou be established.* Which Prophecy seems especially to respect the Times of our blessed Saviour and his Apostles upon their first planting and propagating of Christianity in the World.

But though the first Ages of the Gospel be here primarily and principally meant and intended; yet the Words of the Text are true, and may be understood in a more general and extensive Sense and Meaning, so as to comprehend the common and ordinary Aid and Assistance of God's Spirit afforded to all Mankind. In discoursing therefore upon this Text. I shall,

I. Consider the Words in general.

II. Speak to them as more peculiarly and properly respecting and relating to the primitive State of Christ's Church.

III. More particularly observe how far they concern all Christians at this Time.

I. I shall consider the Words in general; *They shall be all taught of God.*

When we consider the Immensity or Omnipresence of God, by which divine  
Attri-

Attribute is to be understood, that God is present every where, throughout the Universe, confined within no Place, nor excluded from any, but equal and commensurate to all conceivable and even infinite Space and Extension; that as he created the World in the Beginning, so he still preserves and governs it, by whom all Things consist; Inanimate Things continue in Being, are at rest, or in motion: Animate, both sensitive and rational Creatures perform their several Functions and Offices of Life and Action, but both of them by his Concourse and Cooperation; I say, when we consider, that God actuates and enables all his Creatures to exist and exert themselves according to their Nature, it is very easy and reasonable to believe, that he aids and assists all rational Beings with the Influence and Assistance of his Spirit. And, as it is thus reasonable in itself, so it is expressly declared in Scripture, that God is present with us to enable and assist us in all that we do; *For in him we live, and move, and have our Being.*

Acts xvii.  
28.

When God Almighty created the World and endowed all his Creatures with their several Powers and Faculties, he made none of them, no, not the highest Angel in Heaven, self-existent  
and



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and independent of himself; but as they all, from the highest to the lowest, subsist and hold their Being by his good Will and Pleasure; so he continually preserves and provides for them, and communicates the Influences of his Spirit to them. Thus we read in *Genesis*, *The Spirit of God moved upon the Face of the Waters*; upon which ensued by the Word of God the Creation of the Heavens and the Earth. And the same divine Spirit still pervades and diffuses itself throughout the Universe, so that nothing is hid or excluded from the Light and Power thereof. In particular with respect to Mankind, as the whole Trinity concurred in the Creation; so from this Spirit came *that true Light, which lighteth every Man, that cometh into the World*. The Participation and Endowment of this Spirit *Adam* in his Innocency was very graciously blessed withal; and when by his Transgression he forfeited the divine Blessing, God in Mercy did not wholly deprive him of it; but continues still to impart to his Posterity some Rays of this Spirit, which, if rightly applied and made use of, he adds to and increases, and gives Grace for Grace. This is that Light of Nature, which God affords to every Man to lead him into the

the Way of Truth; with which God blesses Man in a right Use of his Liberty and intellectual Faculties, co-operating with and strengthening him in his sincere and hearty Desires and Endeavours to know and practise his Duty.

Almighty God, when he made Man, endowed him with a rational Soul, a Freedom of Will, and a Power to act upon Choice and Deliberation: with a Moral Sense; that is, a Love to Truth and Virtue, and a Disposition to act according to the Nature and Reason of Things, which is the Foundation of all moral Good, and the great Rule of Action to all intelligent Beings whatever. And these Dignities and Excellencies of human Nature still sparkle and discover themselves in Man, and shine forth with great Beauty and Brightness, where they are duly cultivated and improved: God by his general Concourse and Preservation of the World upholding us in our Being and Use of our natural Powers and Faculties, but more powerfully strengthening and assisting us with his good Spirit, in our Studies and Endeavours to raise and rectify, to purify and perfect our weak and vicious and depraved Nature. And thus God teaches all, who will attend to and follow his Instructions, by the Principles of right Reason,

Reason, and the Dictates of their own Mind and Conscience, and the Influence and Illumination of his Spirit.

For Man, notwithstanding the Fall of *Adam*, still continuing a reasonable Creature, by the common Light of Nature, and a right Use and Exercise of his Reason, and the Blessing of God upon his Endeavours, comes to the Knowledge of God and Religion, by the same Means as he attains to the Knowledge of all speculative and practical Truths.

For with the same Diligence and Study we find out and discover the Nature and Properties of Things; for Instance, by the same Reasoning and Argumentation we demonstrate the Figure and Motion of the Earth, with the Revolutions and Positions of the heavenly Bodies; if we will give ourselves Time with the same Seriousness and Attention to pursue the plain and obvious Consequences of Things, and the Conclusions, which naturally and necessarily follow from them, we shall certainly and surely, by the divine Blessing, come to the Demonstration of God and his Attributes, who by his infinite Power, Wisdom, and Goodness hath created all Things, and bestowed upon them the several Qualities and Properties peculiar to their Nature.

ture. For the Inference and Conclusion of the great Apostle St Paul is most true and undeniable, *The invisible Things of God from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the Things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* And again, in another Portion of holy Scripture the same Apostle argues most incontestably, *Every House is builded by some Man; but he, that built all Things, is God.* So that the Being and Attributes of God are demonstrable upon the easiest, plainest, and most obvious Proof.

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Rom. i. 20.

Heb. iii. 4.

In like manner, if we observe the general Laws of Nature established by God in the World, and the common Course of the divine Providence, we daily experience and taste and see how good and bountiful our most gracious Lord and Benefactor is to us; how liberal he is of his Blessings, which he showers down upon us, in the former and the latter Rain, in the constant Returns and Vicissitudes of Day and Night, Summer and Winter: *For he maketh his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good, and sendeth Rain on the Just and on the Unjust.* Thus the living God, which made Heaven and Earth, and the Sea, and all Things that are therein, *bath not left him-*

Mat. v. 45.

Acts xiv.  
15, 17.



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Acts xiv.

15, 17.

Psal. xix.

1, 2, 3, 4.

*self without Witness, in that he does Good, and gives us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness.* This Method hath God taken to make himself known to all the Nations of the World, to teach the Heathens true Religion and the Knowledge of his Laws. *For the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his Handy-work. Day unto Day uttereth Speech, and Night unto Night sheweth Knowledge. There is no Speech nor Language, where their Voice is not heard. Their Line, or their Rule or Direction, is gone out through all the Earth, and their Words to the End of the World.*

Thus by the Light of Nature, and the common Notions of Good and Evil, and the general Sense and Approbation of the one, and the Dislike and Disesteem of the other, together with the Proofs and Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of God, visible in the Frame and Order, Disposition and Beauty of the World, with the constant and daily Experience of the good Providence of God throughout the Universe, all Mankind, who will with due Care and Attention consider these Things, are fully taught and instructed in the great Lines of their Duty and main Articles of natural

tural Religion. And further God inclines and disposes Men by his good Spirit to love and practise Truth and Virtue, if they are not refractory and stubborn and unwilling to be guided and directed by it.

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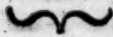
For to come to the Knowledge of the Truth and acquire a Habit of Virtue, with a due Sense of God and Religion, there is a Disposition and Qualification necessary and required, which the Spirit of God puts into the Hearts of such, as neither reject nor resist its Motions and Suggestions: But if we be willing and desirous to receive and embrace the Truth, and have an Esteem and Love of it, and by Application and Study seek and search for it, as for hidden Treasure; then we need not fear nor doubt, but we shall find it.

But before we can live soberly, righteously, and godly, we must forsake our Sins and break off our vicious Customs, that the divine Spirit may cleanse and purify our Hearts and turn us to the Lord our God. For Solomon assures us, *The Preparations of the Heart are of the Lord; and though a Man's Heart deviseth his Way; yet it is the Lord that directeth his Steps.* And this Influence and Direction of God's Spirit Man enjoyed in his natural

Prov. xix.  
1, 9.

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Job xxxii.  
8.

natural State; and all good Men, both among the *Jews* and Heathens, from the Beginning of the World had in different Degrees the Communications and Blessings of it. Thus the Patriarchs, and *Moses* and *David* and all the Prophets were inspired with it. And *Elibu* in *Job* expresses his Sense of the Matter in these Words; *There is a Spirit in Man, and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth them Understanding.* And *Cicero* has a remarkable Passage in his second Book *de Nat. Deor.* *Nemo Vir magnus sine Afflatu divino unquam fuit*; "There never was an eminent Man without the divine Influence." And that this Spirit of God admonishes and solicits and importunes wicked Men to turn from their Wickedness and to do that which is lawful and right, is plain, in that God took this Method with the wicked World before the Flood, as appears from these Words in *Genesis*, *And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with Man.*

Gen. vi. 3.

From what hath been said it appears, that in all Ages of the World the Communications and Aids of the divine Spirit were vouchsafed and imparted to all Mankind in general in different Degrees and in a greater or less Measure, as it seemed best to the divine Wisdom, and according

according to Men's Improvement or Abuse of them. But as the Text refers more especially to the primitive State of Christ's Church, I shall,

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II. Speak to the Words as more peculiarly respecting those Times : And as, according to *Solomon's* Observation, *God hath made every Thing beautiful in his Time* ; Eccl. iii. so the Wisdom of God appears in this<sup>11.</sup> Dispensation of the divine Providence, viz. In the adjusting and affording the several Degrees and Measures of his divers Gifts and Graces according to the Exigency and Circumstances of his Church, when the Gospel first began to be preached and published throughout the World : For as God gave not the Spirit by Measure unto Christ; so of his Fulness all his Disciples and Followers received, and Grace for Grace. For after God had sent his Son into the World to redeem Mankind, to take upon him our Nature with all the Weaknesses and Infirmities of it, to teach and instruct Men in the true Knowledge and Worship of God, *that God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in Spirit and in Truth*, and to confirm his heavenly Doctrine by divers Miracles, and particularly by his Resurrection from the

P Dead;



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Eph. iv.  
11, 12.

Ver. 7.

1 Cor. xii.

8, 9, 10,

11.

Dead; after our blessed Lord had finished his great Work upon Earth, and ascended up far above all Heavens, he gave some Apostles; and some Prophets; and some Evangelists; and some Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ. And unto every one of them, was given Grace according to the Measure of the Gift of Christ. For to one was given by the Spirit, the Word of Wisdom; to another the Word of Knowledge by the same Spirit; to another Faith by the same Spirit; to another the Gifts of Healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of Miracles; to another Prophecy; to another discerning of Spirits; to another divers Kinds of Tongues; to another the Interpretation of Tongues. But all these did work that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every Man severally as he would.

Thus did our blessed Saviour prepare and qualify his Apostles and Disciples, with divers Gifts of the Holy Ghost, to carry on the great Work of Man's Salvation, which he had begun himself, while he lived here on Earth, and the Foundation of which he then laid, and after his Ascension into Heaven, according to his Promise, sent his holy Spirit to

to enable and strengthen them to raise and erect the Superstructure.

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And all this was so done and accomplished, that the Finger of God might manifestly appear and shew itself throughout the whole Design and Enterprize from first to last. For as *Repentance and Remission of Sins were to be preached in Christ's Name, among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem*; So Christ first manifested himself to the *Jews* to be sent from God by many infallible Proofs and Testimonies of the divine Spirit, which resided in him; and fulfilled the Promise of the Father to his Disciples by baptising them with the Holy Ghost, whereby they were enabled and strengthened with Courage and Confidence to preach the Gospel to all Nations, confirming and establishing the Truth of their Doctrine by the many Signs and Wonders, and Miracles, which they wrought. Thus were a few Persons, most of them rude and illiterate, without human Power and Authority, in Opposition to the Superstition and Idolatry then prevailing in the World, and in Despite of Threats and Imprisonment, Temptations and Torments, and even Death itself, animated and emboldened by the holy Spirit, to rebuke the Wickedness and Impiety of the *Gentiles*,

Luke  
xxiv. 47.

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tiles, to encounter and baffle the Learning and Sophistry of the Philosophers, to destroy the Wisdom of the Wise, and to bring to Nothing the Understanding of the Prudent. So were the Words of the Prophet *Isaiah* fulfilled; *Behold! I will proceed to do a marvellous Work amongst this People, even a marvellous Work and a Wonder:*

*Isai. xxix. For the Wisdom of their wise Men shall perish, and the Understanding of their prudent Men shall be hid.*

14.

And not only the Wise and Prudent were thus baffled and confuted, but the High and Mighty, the Princes and Governors of the World were confounded, and overpowered, and unable to resist the Strength and Force of the Apostles Arguments and Miracles in Defence of their Doctrine and Preaching, which is to them that perish Foolishness, but unto us which are saved, it is the Power of God. *Where, therefore, saith St Paul, is the Wise? where is the Scribe? where is the Disputer of this World? Hath not God made foolish the Wisdom of this World? For after that, in the Wisdom of God, the World by Wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the Foolishness of Preaching to save them that believe.* Thus the Power and Wisdom of God were manifest in the first planting and propagating the Gospel; and

and so mightily grew the Word of God, Serm.  
XI. and prevailed, notwithstanding all the Strength and Power, all the Wisdom and Learning, that opposed and resisted it: *Because the Foolishness of God, as St Paul, Cor. i. expresses it, is wiser than Men, and the Weakness of God is stronger than Men.*

But our blessed Lord did not only thus enable and strengthen his Disciples and Followers with his holy Spirit to publish and spread the Gospel over the World; but promised to send them another Comforter in his Absence, which should abide with them for ever; even the Spirit of Truth, to guide and direct them in their Preaching of the Word, and in the Establishment of Truth and Righteousness here on Earth. And this Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, *which the Father would send in his Name, was to teach them all Things, and bring all Things to their Remembrance, whatsoever Christ had said unto them. As he is the Spirit of John xiv. Truth, so he guided the Apostles into all<sup>26</sup> Truth.* And therefore we may infallibly depend upon their Writings, as the<sup>13</sup> Words of Truth and of God.

And thus we are convinced and assured of both, from the Purity and Excellency of the Doctrine and Precepts themselves, contained in the Scriptures,



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and the many great and indisputable Miracles, wrought by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles in Proof and Confirmation of their Mission from God, and of the Truth and Certainty of what they taught and published to the World. And hence by the written Word of God, and the Guidance and Help and Strength of his Spirit, co-operating with, and quickning our natural Powers and Faculties, we are led and conducted into the Ways of Truth and Righteousness here, and of everlasting Joy and Felicity hereafter.

III. But this leads me, 3<sup>dly</sup>, more particularly to observe, how far the Words of my Text concern all Christians at this Time.

I have already taken notice of the Differences, and the Diversities of Operations, which the holy Ghost wrought in the Apostles and primitive Christians upon their first publishing and propagating the Gospel throughout the World; and particularly mentioned the various Effects and Fruits of the divine Spirit in them; For Instance,

1 Cor. xii.  
8, 9, 10. *to one was given the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge, to another Faith, to another the Gifts of Healing, to another the working of Miracles, to another*

Pro-

*Prophecy, to another discerning of Spirits,  
to another divers Kinds of Tongues, to another  
the Interpretation of Tongues.*

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XI.

Now these various and divers Effects and Operations of the Spirit of God are usually distinguished into the Gifts and Graces of the divine Spirit ; the singular and extraordinary Measure and Degree of both which was proper and peculiar to the primitive State of Christ's Church. When at first Christianity was to be set up and established in the World, it was necessary and requisite, that Signs and Wonders, and Miracles of various kinds should be wrought by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, in the Support and Confirmation of it : And the divers Kinds of Tongues, with the Interpretation of them, were highly proper and peculiarly adapted and fitted to the propagating and promulging the Gospel over the World.

But when the Christian Religion had got Footing and began to be established and settled in the World, it pleased God, in his infinite Wisdom, that these miraculous and extraordinary Gifts and Works of his Spirit should gradually diminish and cease among Christians. For though Miracles, at the first Publication and Establishment of Christianity were proper

and necessary for the Proof and Confirmation of the Truth of it, they were not afterwards always so, but became needless, when the Gospel could be propagated, confirmed, and settled by human and probable Means, together with God's ordinary Blessing and Concurrence. But though the miraculous Gifts of the Spirit have ceased and failed, yet the divine Graces of it continue among all true and sincere Christians. And all these Graces are included in the most excellent Grace of Love, or Charity.

And this Grace of the Spirit the Apostle recommends and prefers above every other Gift and Endowment of it. And therefore, when he exhorts the *Corinthians* to *covet earnestly the best Gifts*, he adds in the next Words, *and yet shew I unto you a more excellent Way*. And then he immediately breaks out into the Praise and Commendation of Charity. But by his Account and Description of this Virtue, it is plain, he means not only Alms-giving and Beneficence in general, but the Temper and Disposition of Love, to God first and principally, as the great Author and Original of all Goodness, and then to one another, as far as we are like and resemble God in all Truth and Righteousness.

And

And the Love of God, or of all Truth and Righteousness in general, is most especially owing to the Inspiration and Influence of the holy Spirit, whereby our Minds are not only enlightened with the Knowledge and Manifestation of the Truth, but inflamed with the Love and Esteem, and Desire of it: Whence St Paul says, *I delight in the Law of God*, Rom. vii. *after the inward Man.* And this Influence of the divine Spirit, to incline and dispose us to acknowledge and embrace the Truth in the Love of it, is promised to all Christians in general in all Ages, which was not so fully and expressly made known to either *Jew* or *Gentile*, before Christ came into the World. And this is a great Privilege and an Advantage and Happiness, which we Christians under the Gospel-Dispensation enjoy above the rest of Mankind, to be promised and assured of the Presence and Assistance of God's good Spirit, to lead us into the Way of Truth, and to excite in us a Love towards it. So that if we are willing to be guided and governed by the Spirit in all our Thoughts, Words and Actions, we may safely rely and depend upon his Concurrence and Cooperation with our honest and sincere Endeavours and Purposes to come to the



the Knowledge of the Truth, and to live according to it.

Isai. viii.  
20.

But let not our own Endeavours be wanting, nor let us neglect, nor omit to make use of the common and ordinary Means and Opportunities of knowing the Truth and our Duty; nor unwarrantably expect and depend upon sudden Illapses and Inspirations of the Spirit; but let us *try the Spirits, and bring them to the Law and to the Testimony; and if they speak not according to God's Word, it is because there is no Light in them.* For God hath been pleased to leave us his written Word to be a Rule and Guide to us in all Things necessary to Salvation; and the holy Scriptures are so plain and intelligible to all Persons, who by the Assistance of God's Spirit endeavour to understand them, that there is no Fear nor Danger of their falling into any Mistakes, which will affect or hazard their Salvation; because God hath promised, *If a Man will do his Will, he shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of God.*

John vii.  
17.

The Principles and Precepts of the Christian Religion are so plainly set down and required in Scripture, that he that runs may read his Duty. And the general Rules of doing to others, as we would

would others should do to us; to live soberly, righteously, and godlily, to have our Conversation honest in the Sight of all Men, to fear God, and honour the King, to render to all their Dues; these are Duties so agreeable and consonant to the natural Notions and Dictates of our Mind and Conscience, that upon our first hearing of them, we cannot but own the Reasonableness of them, and feel in ourselves an inward Pleasure, Comfort, and Joy, when we act according to them; as on the contrary we are displeased with ourselves, uneasy and disquieted with Remorse and Anguish of Mind, after we have transgressed them.

And as in many Things we offend all, it must be a great Satisfaction and Relief to the guilty Sinner, to read the Words of St *John*, *If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous; and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.* So that we Christians are peculiarly favoured of God, and particularly obliged to bless and praise him for the clear Revelation of his Will in holy Scripture, and for the plain and full Declaration of the Terms and Conditions of our Salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. Which Terms  
are

*Of the Assistance of God's Spirit, &c.*  
are expressly declared in Scripture to be  
true Repentance, and sincere Obedience  
with Faith in Christ.

Let this therefore be our Rejoicing, the  
Testimony of our Conscience, that in Simpli-  
city and godly Sincerity, not with fleshly Wis-  
dom, but by the Grace of God, we have had  
our Conversation in the World.

2 Cor. i.  
12.

And the Peace of God which passeth  
all, &c.



28 SE60

SERMON

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## S E R M O N XII.

Of *St Paul's* more excellent Way.

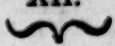
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I COR. XII. 31.

— *Yet shew I unto you a more excellent Way.*

**T**HESE Words plainly refer to the preceding Discourse of the Apostle in this Chapter, which is concerning the Diversities and Differences of Gifts and Administrations and Operations of the same Spirit, of the same Lord, and the same God in the primitive State of Christ's Church. But *St Paul* observes, that these Gifts of the Spirit were conferred on every one for the Use and Benefit of the Church; for the Conversion of Infidels, and the Propagation and Establishment of the Christian Faith in the World;

Serm.  
XII.





Serm.  
XII.1 Cor. xii.  
7.Ver. 8, 9,  
10, 11.

World; and to the End that Christians might be enabled to edify and exhort and comfort one another, as Opportunity and Occasion should require. For the exprefs Words of the Apostle are, *But the Manifestation of the Spirit is given to every Man to profit withal.* And then he proceeds to enumerate particularly these several Gifts of the Spirit; *For to one is given by the Spirit the Word of Wisdom; to another the Word of Knowledge by the same Spirit; to another Faith by the same Spirit; to another the Gift of Healing by the same Spirit; to another the Working of Miracles; to another Prophecy; to another discerning of Spirits; to another divers Kinds of Tongues; to another the Interpretation of Tongues. But all these worketh that one and the same Spirit, dividing to every Man severally as he will.*

And because the Gifts of the Spirit were thus divers, and severally distributed to different Persons, according to God's good Pleasure, St Paul exhorts the Corinthians to covet earnestly the best Gifts; but then in my Text, immediately following, he adds, *And yet shew I unto you a more excellent Way.* The whole Verse runs thus, *But covet earnestly the best Gifts: And yet skew I unto you a more excellent Way.*

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These Gifts of the Spirit were the extraordinary and miraculous Operations of the Holy Ghost, upon the Hearts and Minds of the Apostles and Followers of Christ Jesus, in the Beginning and Infancy of the Christian Church, and were very needful and necessary upon many Accounts in those Times. But in future Ages, when Christianity prevailed and was countenanced in the World, there was not the same Need and Occasion for those singular Manifestations of the Spirit, as at first there was. And as God does not miraculously interpose in ordinary Cases, where human Means are sufficient, with the general Blessing and Concurrence of his good Providence: So in this Case, now that Christianity is professed and Christ believed on amongst us, God guides and directs Christians by the usual and common Influence of his Spirit, which, with their own sincere and hearty Endeavours, sufficiently enables and strengthens them to lead quiet and peaceable Lives in all Godliness and Honesty. Miracles and Wonders and Signs, were proper and peculiar to the first Ages of the Christian Church; But, as they gradually grew unnecessary and needless, they began to fail and cease in succeeding Ages, and in  
vain

vain do we expect to see them now,  
when there is not the like Occasion for  
them.

But when these supernatural and extraordinary Gifts and Administrations of the Spirit were more expedient and useful in the Church, even then, though *St Paul* advises and exhorts the Faithful to covet earnestly the best Gifts, he adds, in the very next Words, which I have chosen for my Text, *And yet shew I unto you a more excellent Way.*

In discoursing upon which Words I shall consider,

Ist, What this more excellent, or as it is in the original Language, far more excellent Way is.

Ildly, Observe, wherein the Excellency of this Way doth consist.

Ist, I shall consider what this more excellent, or far more excellent Way is.

This Way the Apostle hath marked out and described at large in the Words immediately following my Text, which begin the next Chapter. And this Chapter, from the Beginning to the End of it, is taken up in commending and extolling and magnifying that eminent Virtue, Charity. *Though I speak*, says the Apostle,

Apostle, with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brasi, or a tinkling Cymbal. And though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge, and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing: And though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.

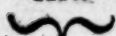
And he then proceeds to give us the distinguishing Marks and the peculiar Properties of Charity; and in the 8th Verse magnifies this Virtue, because it is constantly and perpetually useful and profitable, and will never have an End: *Charity never faileth: but whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; whether there be Knowledge, it shall vanish away; And at last he concludes the Chapter with giving the Preference to Charity, before Faith or Hope in these Words, And* Ver. 13.  
*now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity.*

But here we must observe, that the Original Word, which is translated in our Language *Charity*, properly signifies *Love*; and therefore, though I desire not to be misunderstood as detracting any thing from

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from the true Praise and Commendation of Charity, which in its usual and common Notion signifies Alms-giving or Beneficence in general; yet at the same Time allowing Charity its due Praise and Commendation, it must be acknowledged, that the high Encomium of the Grace and Virtue given by St Paul in in this Chapter is most properly to be understood of Love.

And that this is the Sense and Meaning of the Apostle in this Description, may be very justly concluded from the third Verse, which is very remarkable: *And though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.* But if by Charity here, Bounty and Munificence and Liberality were to be understood, what greater Act of Charity can any one do, than to give all his Goods to feed the Poor? What higher Evidence of his Generosity is it in the Power of any Person to produce to the World, than to give his Body to be burned? And yet the Apostle supposes a Man may do all this, may be thus bountiful and willing to part with his very Life, and have not Charity; which would be an Absurdity and Contradiction, did he by Charity

rity understand only Alms-giving and Munificence.

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As therefore the primary Signification of the Greek Word, *Ἀγάπη*, is Love; So the Supposition of the Apostle and his Reasoning and Argument in this Case plainly prove and require, that by Charity we must especially understand Love in this Place.

But then as our Love is first and principally to be placed on God and all Goodness, and secondarily upon our Neighbour, for God and Goodness Sake; And as Charity in its usual and common Sense is so good and excellent a Virtue, and consequently highly worthy of our best Affection and Love; though this Affection and Disposition of our Minds towards all Goodness and Righteousness in general, is chiefly and especially in this Chapter to be understood; yet by Consequence and Implication this amiable and beautiful Grace, Charity, is highly extolled and recommended by *St Paul*, as the most genuine Fruit and Produce of this Root and Principle of Love, which ought to rule and bear the chief Sway in our Breasts.

As every Cause is known by its Effect, so hereby know we that we love God, if we love our Neighbour also: For as

Serm.

XII.

1 John iv.

20, 21.

St John reasoneth, *He that loveth not his Brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? And this Commandment we have from him, that he that loveth God, love his Brother also.* —

John xiii.

34, 35.

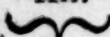
This our blessed Saviour hath made a singular and peculiar Precept of his Religion, and a distinguishing Mark and true Characteristick of his Disciples, by which they were to be known from the rest of the World; *A new Commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another.* It is a right Spirit within us, a clean Heart, which King David prays to God for, *Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me;* A Love of all Truth and Virtue in general, which is properly to be understood by Rectitude of Nature in a rational Being; it is this Spirit, that St Paul especially means, and intends by Charity in this Chapter. This Affection and Propension of Mind to be pleased and delighted with whatever is right and true, just and good, is the Basis and Foundation of all Morality, and Principle of all moral Excellence in general: Which Disposition of Mind, when

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it leads us and tends to the particular Virtue, Charity, or Benevolence, and Beneficence according to our Ability and Opportunity, is what we strictly and truly call good Nature in any Person, the most beautiful Ornament of Life, and the most amiable Character we can desire. This kind and affectionate Inclination and Temper is chiefly signified in St Paul's high and pompous Description of Charity, in this Chapter; and these are the peculiar Properties which he here gives of it. *Charity suffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not; Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no Evil, rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth: Beareth all Things, believeth all Things, hopeth all Things, endureth all Things.* Such a Temper of Mind will break out and exert itself in Acts of Goodness and Beneficence and Kindness, as naturally as from a clear Spring will derive pure Streams, or as a good Tree will bring forth good Fruit. Thus St Paul saith, *The Fruit of* Ephes. v. *the Spirit is in all Goodness, and Righteousness, and Truth.* And again, *the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faith, Meekness, Temperance.* These are the happy Effects



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of a good Nature and Disposition ; these are the principal Virtues, which constitute Morality, these are the shining Graces, which next to the Love of God, set off and adorn our Christian Profession ; these are the great Ingredients of all true Happiness, the highest Pleasure and Delight of Life.

Such was our primitive and original Nature which we received at our Creation, as it was first formed and fashioned by God's own Hands, and as it proceeded pure and perfect, innocent and upright from him ; a true Image and fair Resemblance of the Deity. And such was the happy State and Condition of our first Parents in Paradise, before Sin entered into the World ; the Spirit of their Mind was congenial and conformable to the Spirit of God ; the Disposition of their Will was turned to Goodness and Virtue, Truth and Sincerity ; and all their Happiness consisted in the Favour, and Countenance of God, and in a lawful and innocent Enjoyment of all the Pleasures and Recreations which this World in its best State could afford. And when the wicked and rebellious Spirits could not but with Envy and Malice behold this happy Pair, these blessed Favourites of Heaven, and were tormented with the Thoughts and Reflections on all  
all

all the Happinefs they had loft by their ungrateful Revolt againft their great Creator and munificent Benefactor, and the intolerable Mifery they had thereby brought on themfelves; when Satan by his Subtlety and Artifice had seduced and betrayed our firft Parents, and had prevailed upon *Adam* to diftruft God and to difobey his exprefs Command, whereby he incurred the divine Difpleafure, and became fubject to Mifery, like that Arch-Rebel himfelf; and when God was pleafed in Mercy to take Man's fallen State into Confideration, and to contrive the Means of his Recovery out of it, by the Propitiation and Atonement of his only begotten Son; what is the End and Design of our Saviour's Coming into the World, but to renew a right Spirit in Man, and to reftore in him the Image of God, after which he was at firft formed? And wherein does this Image chiefly confift, but in Righteoufnefs and true Holinefs? This is what *St Paul* calls the New Man, and thus he describes the State of the Regenerate in his Epiftle to the *Ephesians*; *Be ye renewed in the Spirit* Eph. iv. *of your Mind, and put ye on the new Man,* 23, 44. *which after God is created in Righteoufnefs and true Holinefs.* So that this Spirit, this Affection, this Difpofition, this Turn and

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Temper of Mind, whereby a Christian loves and embraces Truth and Righteousness, Goodness and Holiness, is the proper Image and Resemblance of God, and consequently the most excellent. But this leads me to observe,

Illy, Wherein the Excellency of this Way mentioned in my Text doth consist.

This Way, I have told you, St Paul describes at large in the next Chapter, under the Character of *Charity* or *Love*, which is an Affection of Mind to be pleased and delighted with the Dignity and Excellency and Perfection of its Object. The same Apostle in his Second Epistle to the *Thessalonians*, particularly mentions *the Love of the Truth, and assigns the Cause of all Deceivableness of Unrighteousness, in them that perish, to be, because they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be saved.* And agreeably to this, our Saviour saith, *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men loved Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil.* Now though the Truth which is here meant, be the particular Truth of the Gospel; yet it may be affirmed of all Truth in general, that it appears amiable and desirable to all pure

Theff. ii.  
10.

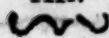
John iii.  
19.

pure and unprejudiced Minds. And this naturally follows and arises from the Suitableness and Agreeableness of the Object to the rational Power and Faculty, and the moral Sense of our Minds, or a right Affection. For all Pleasure and Satisfaction, all Love and Delight consist in the Congruity and Conformity of Things to the Nature and Properties of the Being, which is capable of perceiving and knowing them, and receives a grateful Sensation and Liking from them.

But now the proper Definition of Truth is a Conformity to the Nature and Reason of Things; and consequently, Truth must be grateful and delightful to all Beings, whose rational Nature is not vitiated and depraved, and who have not lost and corrupted all the Taste and Relish of their moral Sense. For moral Good, or a Conformity to Reason, is as agreeable and pleasant to our moral Sense, as sensitive Good is suitable and grateful to our sensitive Appetite. But as rational Beings endowed with a moral Sense or righteous Disposition are the most excellent we can conceive, and as their Excellency consists chiefly in the Love of Truth and Righteousness, and is proportionable to it; so a Conformity of Practice



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Practice to Reason upon this Principle, which is in other Words Truth and Righteousness, must be the highest rational Good, and consequently the most worthy and excellent Object of our Desire and Love. Hence it appears, that the Love of Truth and Righteousness in general ought to be the sovereign and ruling Principle in our Minds. For as the Nature and Reason of Things is the great Rule and Measure of Action, to all reasonable Beings, and as Truth and Righteousness is a Conformity of Practice to this Rule, and as this Rule is the Standard of all Virtue and Goodness, and as far as they vary from this Standard they degenerate and lose their Nature; so must Truth and Righteousness be the most general and chief Object of our Love.

And as Truth in general is thus grateful and agreeable, lovely and delightful to our Minds; so Goodness and Virtue, and all Righteousness, is consequently a proper Object suitable and adapted to our Approbation and Love. For Righteousness in general is a Conformity of Will and Practice to Truth, and Truth I defined before to be a Conformity to the Nature and Reason of Things. So that a right Practice, or Virtue, and  
Good-

Goodness must be measured and regulated by Truth, the Rule of which is the Nature and Reason of Things; and as any Action agrees or disagrees with Truth, it is either virtuous, or vicious, and consequently approved or disapproved, liked or disliked by all rational, uncorrupt, and unprejudiced Beings. For we all perceive and experience the innate Beauty and Comeliness of good and virtuous Actions, and their Suitableness and Amiability to our Minds; as on the contrary, we cannot be insensible and ignorant of the inherent Deformity and Turpitude of all vicious Practices; with the Dislike and Aversion they naturally beget in us; and this the vicious and dissolute Part of the World generally are sensible of in themselves, and it is a considerable Time, and after a long Practice and an habitual Custom in Sin and Wickedness before this natural Approbation and Love of Virtue, and Dislike and Hatred of Vice wears off, and ceases to create Uneasiness and Disturbance in the Breasts of the Wicked.

This is an Argument drawn from Experience of the Approbation and Love we naturally have of Virtue and Goodness, and of our Disaffection and Aversion to Vice, before our Minds and Consciences

sciences are depraved and hardened, and seared by a continued Course and Habitude of Sin.

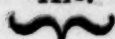
From hence it is evident, that the Love of Truth and Righteousness is the Principle the Source and Spring of all good and righteous Actions. And as the Principle of a righteous Practice ought to be the Love of Truth and Righteousness; So the End and Design we propose to ourselves in our Actions should be chiefly and principally the Support and Maintenance and Defence of the Cause of Truth and Righteousness, and the propagating and spreading the Power and Dominion thereof throughout the World. For the Motive and Inducement to act and begin any Undertaking, ought to include and take in the End and Design we propose to ourselves in it, if we would act rationally and consistently with ourselves. And every wise and intelligent Being will make choice of Means suitable and proper to the End he has in View in his Actions; and consequently, the Principle and End and Means of a righteous Practice will unite and be the same, an uniform and universal Love of all Truth and Righteousness.

I have been the longer and the more careful and exact in determining and fixing the first and chief Object of our Love, as it is the Basis and Foundation of all Virtue and Morality, and the Sum and Substance of the Christian Religion; the peculiar Property and distinguishing Character of which is Love; and the first and great Object of this Affection is God, the Author and Fountain of all Truth and Righteousness; and the second Object is our Neighbour, as far as he is like God, and partakes of his Image in Holiness. *On these two Commandments*, saith our blessed Saviour, *hang all the Law and the Prophets.* And we may add, the great End and Design of his Gospel is to recover and restore in us the Image and Favour of God, by renewing in us this Spirit and Affection, and by enabling and assisting us with his Grace in the Performance of our Duty, by conforming and squaring all our Intentions and Actions according to this Rule and Principle.

Matt. xxii.  
40.

But the Word Righteousness so often here repeated is to be understood in its full and largest Sense and Acceptation, so as to comprehend and include all Virtue and Goodness in general; and in other Words it may be said to be a righteous



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teous Practice, or a Conformity of our Thoughts, Words, and Actions to the Nature and Reason of Things, upon a Principle of Love thereof: and in any particular Case it is a Conduct and Behaviour according to the Relation and Dependance, the Qualities and Circumstances of Persons and Things, with whom we are engaged and concerned in any Matter or Business whatsoever. In every Relation, in every Condition of Life, the Nature and Reason of Things ought to be the general Rule of our Practice.

The Love therefore of Virtue and Goodness in general should be the Spring and Principle of all our Actions. But as there are different Virtues of several Kinds, and some more excellent than others; So the particular Virtue of Love or its genuine Fruit, Charity, so much magnified and extolled by *St Paul*, is the most excellent of any one particular Virtue we can conceive. The Principle upon which this Grace and Virtue depends, is a Disposition and Propension to do good Offices and Services to others, to be benevolent and kind, useful and beneficial to each other, to be tender-hearted and affectionate, obliging and compassionate, ready to pity and com-  
miserate

miserate and relieve, as far as we are able, the Infirmities and Weaknesses, the Disorders and Pains and Sickneſs, the Calamities and Misfortunes, the Afflictions and Diſtreſs any of us may be liable and expoſed to.

Such ought to be the Affection, Temper and Diſpoſition of our Minds, the Frame and Conſtitution of our Nature, the Inclination and Tendency and End of all our Deſires and Wiſhes for the Good and Happineſs, Welfare and Proſperity of all about us. It is this moſt excellent Affection of Love, in the Praise and Commendation of which St Paul ſo much exults and triumphs, and which we render *Charity*, as it is the good and true Root and right Principle of all Charity; without which, ſays the Apoſtle, *though I ſpeak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as ſounding Braſs, or a tinkling Cymbal. And though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and underſtand all Myſteries, and all Knowledge, and though I have all Faith, ſo that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing. And though I beſtow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

From theſe laſt Words it plainly appears, that unleſs our Charity proceed  
from

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from a right Principle, the Love of our Neighbour; and unless it be intended and directed to a good End, the Relief and Support of him in his Distress, or any other way to his real Good and Benefit, either in Body or Soul; unless our Charity proceed from this good Affection and Intention, though we be ever so liberal and munificent, though we give away all we have in the World, freely offering ourselves to the sharpest Tortures, undergoing the extremest Misery, and sacrifice our very Lives, it profiteth us nothing. But if our Charity be the Effect of our real Love to our Neighbour, and the End and Intent of it be the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind, whatever we dispose of with this View will be graciously accepted and amply recompensed at the Resurrection of the *Just*. For the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews hath assured us, *God is not unrighteous to forget our Work and Labour of Love, which we have shewed toward his Name.*

Luke xiv.  
14.

Heb. vi.  
10.

Nor is it so much the Sum and Quantity of our Charity, which God chiefly regards, as the Mind and Will, with which we bestow it. And however small the Offering may be, if it be made with a willing Mind, and from a sincere

sincere and honest Heart to the Praise of God's Glory, the Sacrifice will be well pleasing in his Sight, and fully rewarded at the last great Day. To this Purpose our blessed Saviour expressly says, *Who-soever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a Cup of cold Water only, in the* Matt. x. *Name of a Disciple, verily I say unto you, he* 42. *shall in no wise lose his Reward.*

But though it be the inward Affection of the Mind, which God especially respects and regards, yet, if this Affection be sincere and true, it will break out and shew itself in Acts of Beneficence, Kindness and Humanity, Compassion and Tenderness, Mercy and Pity. And unless these Acts appear in our Lives and Conversations, in vain do we pretend to the true Principle of Charity, the Love of God, and of one another. Nor indeed is Benevolence only, without Beneficence, when this is in our Power, strictly speaking, a true Definition of Virtue, which is a right Practice upon a good Principle, and consists in Actions just and true, right and good, when we have an Ability and Opportunity of performing them; and no Actions are preferable to Beneficence in general, which ought to be the Aim and End of all we do. The far more excellent Way, which



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St Paul means to shew the *Corinthians* in his full and magnificent Description of Charity, leads to good Works, to the Praise and Glory of God, and to the edifying, and benefiting one another. God only knoweth the Secrets of our Hearts, Men can only judge of our Sincerity from our outward Actions, and according to these ought they to pronounce of our Piety and Goodness; but no Actions are more glorious and illustrious in the Sight of Men, than pious and charitable Benefactions. *Let therefore your Light so shine before Men, that they may see your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven.* It is the great End and Design, and peculiar Commendation and Glory of the Christian Religion, to lead us by its Doctrine and Precepts to the true Happiness and Perfection of our Nature, by commanding whatever is substantially good and excellent, and forbidding every Thing that is base and wicked, dishonourable, unworthy and misbecoming a Man. When therefore St Paul exhorts the *Corinthians* to covet earnestly the best Gifts of the Spirit, at the same Time he offers to shew them a more excellent Way, which is to desire chiefly the Virtues and Graces of the Spirit; and, as the most excellent of these

these he instanceth in Love and Charity, the first as the Principle, the other as the End of all Virtue and Goodness; both which may be called Benevolence and Beneficence, the primary Laws of all Religion both natural and revealed.

A Disposition and Propension of Nature to be kind and beneficent, to wish and desire the Welfare and Happiness of one another; and to endeavour to promote it, as we have Opportunity and Ability, and, as far as it is reasonable and wise and just, is a Temper of Mind the most excellent we can conceive, a Frame and Constitution most suitable and becoming, grateful, and delightful, to a rational good Being, the happiest we can desire, the most godlike and divine. For God is good, and doth Good, and the truest Image and Resemblance we can imagine of God is to be like him in Goodness. To conclude with the Exhortation of St Paul, and in the Words of our blessed Saviour, *Be ye followers of God as dear Children, and walk in Love, &c. Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect.* Which that we may all endeavour to be, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Eph. v.  
1, 2.

Matt. v.  
45.

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## S E R M O N XIII.

Of our imitating the Divine Perfections.

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MATTHEW. V. 48.

*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father,  
which is in heaven, is perfect.*

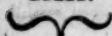
**W**HEN it pleased almighty God to finish and compleat the Work of this visible Creation, and, as his last and most perfect Piece, to make Man, he made him after his own Image and Likeness, in which consisted the Dignity and Excellence, the Superiority, Glory and Happiness of human Nature. In a Resemblance of the Deity, and in a Conformity to the divine Will, the Felicity of our first Parents in Paradise was placed; and when they had forfeited

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their Innocence and this blessed State, by their Disobedience and Sin; their Happiness could not otherwise be recovered, than by restoring them to the divine Image and Similitude, after which they were originally made. This God was pleased to accomplish, out of his infinite Goodness and Mercy, when the Fulness of Time was come, by his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, who appeared in the World to redeem Mankind from that Sin and Misery, in which they had plunged themselves by their Degeneracy and Depravity, and to direct them in their Recovery of their primitive Innocence, Perfection, and Purity. For as the Happiness of Man, before the Fall, consisted in the Perfection of his Nature, so his Happiness ever since has been to attain that Perfection; and this was the Design of our blessed Saviour's coming into the World, to teach Men the true Way to Happiness, and to declare to them, that it is only to be obtained, both in this Life and the next, by Purity and Holiness. Indeed Happiness and Holiness and Perfection, are inseparable, and always proportionable, so that every Man is really more or less happy, as he is more or less holy, pure and perfect; and consequently, to propose to ourselves the

the Attainment of the utmost Perfection of our Nature, as the great End and Design of our Being, is truly to aim at the highest Happiness we are capable of. And from hence appears how excellent and sublime a Precept we have given us in the Text, wherein our Lord and Saviour sets before us the Perfection of the Deity for our Imitation and Resemblance; and consequently, requires us to be Partakers of the divine Nature, if ever we hope to be Heirs of the divine Glory and Blessedness. *Be ye therefore perfect, &c.*

Which Words first suppose the absolute Perfections of the divine Nature, and then enjoin and command us to aim at an Imitation of them.

I. Therefore I shall endeavour to prove the Perfections of God in general.

II. Shew how we are to conceive of them.

III. Consider how far we may imitate them.

I. The Perfections of God in general may be thus proved. The most obvious Notion and Apprehension of God is, That he is the first Cause, and original Author of all Things; that he made us,

and not we ourselves, that to him we owe all the Powers and Faculties we have; and consequently, whatever Perfections we ourselves are endowed with, or are visible in any Part of the Creation, must at first be in him, either in the same Kind, but in an infinitely more exalted Degree, or of a different Kind, but of a Nature much more perfect and excellent. For it is impossible, that the Creature should receive any Power or Excellence, which is not some how virtually possessed and enjoyed by the Creator. For it is an Axiom allowed of by all Men, that the Effect cannot be more excellent than its Cause, nor have any intrinsic and real Property which is not in its Cause, either in the same Kind at least, or in a much more exalted Measure, or perhaps of a different Kind, but of a more perfect Nature. And this is true, and may be justly applied in demonstrating the Perfections of God from the Works of the Creation.

No Man can be so ignorant, but he must observe and know that the Creatures, which he sees in the World, are not necessary and self-existent, nor were they the Cause of their own Existence; he may be certain from a very little Experience, that the Beings he beholds did  
not

not make themselves, and he cannot but be sensible of this Truth from his own Existence, which he knows was derived from another Being, and that other Being from a third, and so on; and consequently, that Mankind is a Race of dependent Creatures, none of which being self-existent, the whole Race cannot be self-existent, and therefore must at first derive from some necessary and self-existent Being, which Being we call God. For that a Series of dependent Beings, none of which are self-existent, cannot be the Cause of their own Existence, but must in the Beginning receive it from some other self-existent and independent Being, different from themselves, is as true and certain, as that no Effect can be produced without a Cause; and that from nothing, simply and by itself considered, without any external Cause, it is impossible, that any thing should ever arise. And therefore, as certain as we are of our own Existence, and that we ourselves did not make ourselves; so certain may we be of some first original Cause, from whom we derived our Being, which Cause must be necessary and self-existent, and is what we understand God to be.

And



And further it is evident that this Being, from whom originally we derive our own Existence, and whom we have proved necessary and self-existent, as certainly as it is possible for us to be assured of our own Existence, it is very evident also, that this Being must be eternal. For, because this self-existent Being is the first and original Cause of our own Being, as we have already demonstrated, had there ever been a Time, in which this Being did not exist, it is impossible we should ever have existed. And as this Being is self-existent, from the Moment he is supposed not to exist, he can never afterwards exist himself; because he derives not his Being from any other, and it is impossible he should spring up into Being out of nothing. As certainly therefore, as we are assured of our Existence, and of the Truth of this self-existent Proposition, that nothing can arise out of nothing, of itself, and without a Cause; so certain we may be, that the self-existent Author and Cause of our Being must be eternal. And by another like self-evident Proposition, namely, that in the Effect there can be no real Excellence and Perfection, which is not originally in its Cause, we may demonstrate, that this  
eternal,

eternal, self-existent Being must be intelligent and possess of every Virtue and Excellence we are sensible of in ourselves.

But when we consider not only ourselves as the Work of his Hands, but the whole Creation as the Effect of his Power and Wisdom and Goodness, what Reason have we to believe, that the Author of so excellent, so admirable, and so stupendous a Work, must be a Being possessed of, not only all the Perfections and Excellencies, which we ourselves enjoy, or are visible in any Part of the World, but in a much higher Degree, and in a much larger Extent, than they are in us, or any of his Creatures; and in a Word, what Reason have we to believe, that the Creator of the World must have all possible, absolute, and universal Perfection.

Thus by a right Use of our Reason, and upon Principles indisputable and infallible, may we come to the Knowledge of God, and of his divine Nature and Attributes, and be assured, that he must be a Being endued with all possible Perfection. And this Notion the best and wisest among the Heathens always entertained of the Deity. The Greeks usually stiled God τὸ ἀπείρητον, "the best of Beings."

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Beings. And the common Phrase among the Romans was, *Deus optimus, maximus, beatissima, et perfectissima Natura, constans et perfecta Ratio*; that is, "God the Best, "the greatest Being, the most happy, "and most perfect Nature, immutable "and absolute Reason."

And in holy Scripture we find God every where represented as the most perfect and excellent Being. Thus, saith Job, *Dost thou know the Ballancing of Clouds, the wondrous Works of him, which is perfect in Knowledge? Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to Perfection? Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out; he is excellent in Power, and in Judgment, and in Plenty of Justice. How excellent is his Name in all the Earth. And again, Praise him according to his excellent Greatness.* I shall not now attempt to explain the several Perfections of the divine Nature, but will endeavour to shew, how we are to apprehend and conceive of them, which was my second Head of Discourse.

Job xxxvii.  
16. xi. 7.  
xxxvii. 23.

Psal. viii. 1.  
cl. 2.

II. The first and most natural Apprehension of God seems to be this, That he is the first Cause and original Author of all Things; and from hence  
it

it necessarily follows, that he must be a Being endued with all possible Perfection. This seems to be the Second most obvious Notion of the Deity, and is immediately deducible from the first Idea we form in our Minds of God, as the Creator of the World, and by consequence possessed of all the Excellencies and Perfections which are observable in any, or all his Creatures: Because it is impossible any Creature should have any Perfection, which it did not receive from its Creator.

But we must not only ascribe all the real and true Perfections, which are visible in the Creatures, to the Creator; but must imaginemany other Excellencies and Perfections in Him of a different Kind and Nature, none of which are in his Creatures. And those Perfections, which the Creatures may in some measure partake of, we ought to believe, that they are enjoyed by the Creator in their highest Degree, and infinitely above all, that we can imagine to be in any Creature.

As God is the first Cause and sole Author of all Beings, he must necessarily be independent, and self-existent, and eternal, and the only supreme Being; none of which Perfections can be in any of his Creatures, even the most  
excellent



*Of our imitating the divine Perfections.*

excellent of them, because they are inconsistent with their Nature. And those other Perfections, which we ascribe to God, and which are in some measure to be found in his Creatures, according to their finite Natures and Capacities, are to be conceived boundless and unlimited, and infinite in him, and really beyond our highest Thoughts and Conceptions.

We are indeed to imagine all possible Perfections in the Deity, of all Kinds, and in their most exalted Degree; but when we have raised our Conceptions to their highest Pitch, and stretched our Thoughts to their utmost Compass, we must at last confess and believe, that the divine Excellencies are still higher and higher, and not to be comprehended in their full Extent by our finite Imaginations.

It is impossible to conceive any more than three Dimensions, Length, Breadth, and Depth, or Height, in natural Bodies. And therefore when the Apostle would represent the divine Attributes, and in particular the immense Love of our blessed Saviour towards us, and prays, *that we may be able to comprehend, with all Saints, what is the Breadth, and Length, and Depth, and Height, and to know*

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*know the Love of Christ, he immediately adds, which passeth Knowledge; intimating, that when we have extended our Imagination every way, if possible, beyond the Limits of finite Bodies, we must acknowledge, we are not able to conceive the divine Perfections; and must cry out, O, the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!*

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And that we should believe the Perfections of God to be infinite, and not confine them to our shallow Understandings, and limited Apprehensions of Things, is very agreeable and consonant to natural Reason, which dictates to us, that there must be a vast Distance and Disproportion between the Creator and the Creature; greater far, than it is possible there can be between one Creature and another; between a Worm and a Man. And how incapable is that despicable Reptile to understand the Thoughts, and Designs, and Abilities of a Man? And much less is a weak and ignorant Man able to comprehend the Wisdom, and Counsel, and Power of Almighty God. *Canst thou by searching find out God? says Job: Canst thou find out the Almighty to Perfection?* Infinitely more pardonable  
and

and less arrogant would it be in an Infant to pretend to understand the Reasonings and Deductions of some great Mathematician, namely, the Demonstrations of *Archimedes*, or *Apollonius*, or Sir *Isaac Newton*, than it is in a Creature to offer at a full Conception and Knowledge of the Nature, and Attributes, and Perfections of his Creator. *Ecclesiasticus* xliiii. 26, &c. But though it be impossible for us fully to comprehend the divine Nature and his boundless Perfection; yet we are able to understand, and may certainly know, what is manifestly inconsistent and incompatible with the Godhead; what is contrary and repugnant to his Essence; what would destroy the very Notion and Idea we have of a Deity, should we attribute it to him; and that is any Evil or Imperfection, either natural or moral: And this is what we must most carefully avoid.

That we are not able to imagine the infinite Perfections and Excellencies of the divine Nature, and cannot form any adequate, or truly proportionable Idea of them, much less fully understand them, God will pardon and forgive, and impute to our bounded and limited Capacities: But should we entertain any unworthy Apprehension of the Deity, should we

we conceive any Spot or Blemish in the divine Nature, this would be an unpardonable Crime in us; and it were better we formed to ourselves no Idea at all of God. The one would be but mere Disbelief of his Existence, the other a Dishonour and Reproach and a disgraceful Reflection upon his Being. The remarkable Expression of *Plutarch* in his Book of Superstition is generally and very properly quoted on this Occasion; where he professeth it much more desirable to him, that Posterity should say, that there never was such a Man, as *Plutarch*, rather than that he was a fierce, unconstant, revengeful Person; one, who upon the least Omission of any small Circumstance of Respect towards him, by Men otherwise virtuous and worthy, would tear out their Hearts, ruin their Families, blast their Fields, destroy their Cattle with Lightning and Thunder.

And in like manner, it must be a great Offence to God, the best and most perfect Being, to be thought of by his Creatures in an unbecoming manner, and represented under Notions contrary and opposite to his Nature.

In a Word, as we must attribute all possible, universal, and absolute Perfection to the Deity in all Kinds and in



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all Particulars, in their highest and most exalted Degrees, even infinitely beyond the Reach of our limited and narrow Conceptions; so likewise must we remove all manner of Imperfection from God; ascribe nothing to him, that may fully or darken his Essence; nothing that may be a Reproach, or Reflection, or an Indignity to him: But conceive of him as the purest, holiest, best of Beings; and consequently, the most fit, noble, excellent and absolute Pattern for our Imitation. *Vid. Antonin. Gatak. in Matt. v. 48.* Which brings me to the third and last Particular I proposed to speak to, our Imitation and Resemblance of the divine Excellencies and Perfections.

III. The Idea, which we ought to form in our Minds of God, is the Idea of the most excellent, most perfect, and best Being; and consequently, as such, God is the most compleat and absolute Pattern we can imitate.

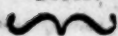
But because there is such an infinite Disproportion between the divine and human Nature; as indeed there must necessarily be between the Creator and any of his Creatures; and because it would be the greatest Sin, we could be

be guilty of against the supreme Majesty of Heaven and Earth, to presume to imitate him in some of his transcendent Excellencies, such as his Independency, Self-sufficiency, Supremacy, Immenfity, and his other incommunicable Attributes; therefore we should consider carefully what those Perfections are, we are commanded in the Text to imitate, and how far our created Natures are capable of such Imitation.

Now the divine Excellencies, which most especially we are required to imitate, are those which relate to the divine Will, commonly called the moral Perfections of God, such as his Righteousness and Goodness, his Justice, his Mercy, his Truth and Faithfulness, and the like. In these we should endeavour to resemble God with all our Powers and Abilities, though we shall never be able to come up to the Pattern set before us.

As to the other Perfections of the divine Nature, it would be the highest Crime and Treason against the Majesty of God to offer at, or desire any Participation of some of them, as I have already mentioned; and it probably was the Pride and Sin of *Lucifer* and the Apostate Angels, an Ambition to usurp the Supremacy of the most High: And

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indeed an Imitation of the divine Independency, All-sufficiency to his own Happiness, the Sovereignty, and several other Attributes of God, is absolutely inconsistent with the finite and dependent Nature of a Creature. But there are also other Attributes of the divine Nature, which, though it be not unlawful for us to imitate, yet our Imitation of them is not required of us, as our Duty; because we may pervert and make an ill Use of them: Such as the Power and Wisdom and Knowledge of God, abstracted from his Righteousness and Goodness. For these Qualities are of such a Nature, that they may be, and very often are misapplied, and made use of to do much Evil and Mischief in the World.

Power without Righteousness and Goodness, becomes Oppression and Tyranny, and Wisdom degenerates into Deceit and Treachery. The Devil and his Legions of wicked Spirits may be said to have Power and Wisdom, but, being abandoned to all Envy and Malice, Cruelty and Mischief, they use them to the worst of Purposes. So that to aim to be like God in Wisdom and Power, without any regard to Goodness, Truth and Righteousness, is really no Virtue, but what

what the Devils themselves are capable of.

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But to endeavour to resemble God in Goodness, and Righteousness, and Holiness, is truly our Duty, and what none but the blessed Angels and good Spirits are capable of besides ourselves. And that our blessed Saviour chiefly propounds in my Text, for our Imitation, the Goodness and Benignity, the Mercy and Patience and Forbearance of God, is very evident from the preceeding Verses, and the Occasion of this Precept. And in a parallel Place these Words are rendered by St Luke, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.*

So that, though the absolute Perfection of the divine Nature be supposed indeed in the Text, yet the Sense of it is, that we should imitate in particular the Goodness and loving Kindness and Mercy of God, his Righteousness and Holiness over all his Works.

And agreeably hereunto are we commanded in other Places of holy Scripture to imitate the Mercy and Justice, and Purity and Holiness of the divine Nature. And by Holiness is meant all the Perfections relating to the divine Will in general; whereby God is sepa-



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rated and removed at an infinite Distance from all moral Imperfection and Evil, and what we call Sin.

Hence therefore it follows, that when we are commanded *to be holy, as God is holy*, we are required to abstain from all Sin and Impurity, and to imitate all the divine Virtues of Goodness and Mercy and Patience, of Love and Kindness, of Justice, Truth and Faithfulness. In these Virtues consists the Life and Soul of all Religion. These we may safely imitate with all the Powers and Faculties of our Souls. Here we may exercise our highest Ambition, and be sure of obtaining Glory and Honour and Immortality, as the Reward of our Imitation.

In these Perfections consists the Brightness and Beauty of the Deity, and by imitating these we shall shine in the full Lustre and Glory of our Nature. Humanity is generally understood to signify Goodness and Kindness, and Compassion and Tenderness, and in the Exercise of these Graces and Virtues it approaches nearest to the Divinity.

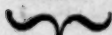
It is impossible indeed we should ever be able to attain the imitable Excellencies of the divine Nature in that Perfection and Degree, in which they are possessed

essed by God. This the Condition and Nature of a Creature will not admit of; nor can this be supposed the Meaning of my Text; because it is certainly impracticable, and above the Reach of our finite Capacities. Serm. XIII.

But it does not therefore follow, that we may not endeavour to be as like God in Goodness, Righteousness, and Holiness, as far as we are able. Every Man can do as much as he can, and this is all that can be expected from him, and no more is required of us in my Text.

Therefore when we are commanded to *be perfect, as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect*, we must believe, it is our Duty, and incumbent on us all to aim at the utmost Perfection of our Nature; to advance from one Grace to another, <sup>2 Pet. i.</sup> to add to Faith Virtue, &c. and to a- <sup>5, &c.</sup> bound in all Goodness, that we may be the Children of the most High, being Followers of him, and made Partakers of the divine Nature, as far as we Creatures are capable.

And methinks it should be so far from being a Discouragement to us to have so excellent and perfect a Pattern set before us for our Imitation, so fair a Copy to

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transcribe, that it should quicken our Endeavours, and excite in us the most ardent Wishes and Desires to resemble as much as is possible so amiable, so beautiful, and so glorious an Original: Especially considering, that herein consists all the Dignity and Excellence of our Nature, all the Pleasure and Satisfaction of our Souls, all our Glory and Happiness both in this World and the other.

If ever we hope to see God, we must endeavour to be like him; we must be transformed into his Image, before we can enjoy him. The divine Presence can afford no Comfort nor Satisfaction, no Pleasure nor Delight, no Enjoyment to an unholy Person. The pure only in Heart are capable of seeing God.

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 3. *And whoever hath this Hope purifies himself, even as he is pure.* The Temper, Disposition and Happiness of the blessed Angels and Spirits above, consist in the Purity and Holiness and Perfection of their Nature. And such must be the Frame and Disposition of our Minds, such must be our Inclinations and Passions in this World, with these Graces and Virtues, with these Ornaments and Perfections of our Souls must we go hence, and be no more seen, if ever we

*Of our imitating the divine Perfections.* 265

we hope to behold the Presence of our heavenly Father in Righteousness, to awake after his Likeness, and to be satisfied with his Glory. Which God of his infinite Mercy grant through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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SERMON



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Owing to the fact that the  
 we hope to be able to find the  
 interest in the future, to be  
 with the future, and to be  
 in the future, to be  
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## S E R M O N XIV.

Of our imitating the Mercy of  
God.

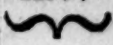
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L U K E VI. 36.

*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also  
is merciful.*

**T**HESE Words are an Inference  
from what our blessed Saviour  
had urged in the Verse im-  
mediately before my Text, as a Motive and  
Encouragement for us to love our Ene-  
mies, and to do Good; namely, that  
our Reward shall be great, and we shall  
be the Children of the Highest, for he is  
kind unto the Unthankful and to the Evil.  
He begins the Context with a very posi-  
tive and strict Injunction of this Duty;  
*But I say unto you, which hear, love your  
Enemies,*

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*Enemies, do Good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And he enforces the Duty with these weighty Arguments: For if ye love them, which love you, what Thank have ye? For Sinners also love those that love them. And if you do Good to them, which do Good to you, what Thank have ye, for Sinners also do even the same? And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what Thank have ye, for Sinners also do lend to Sinners to receive as much again? And then he repeats the Command, and adds the highest Consideration to encourage our Obedience to it; But love ye your Enemies, and do Good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your Reward shall be great, and ye shall be the Children of the Highest; for he is kind unto the Unthankful and to the Evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Which Words,*

1st, Suppose the Mercy of God, and,  
2d, Require us to be likewise merciful.  
And in discoursing upon them I shall endeavour to do these three Things.

I. I will endeavour to prove that Mercy is a divine Attribute, and truly to be ascribed to God.

II.

II. I will consider the Obligations we are under to show Mercy and Forgiveness to one another.

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III. I will more particularly urge the Consideration of the divine Mercy, propounded to us in my Text for our Imitation, as an Argument to prevail upon us sincerely and heartily to practise this Duty.

I. I will endeavour to prove, that Mercy is a divine Attribute, demonstrable upon Principles of natural Reason, and attested to by the Heathen, but most fully revealed in the Books of the Old and New Testament. But before I begin to prove, that this Attribute belongs to God, I will explain what is understood by the divine Mercy.

The Mercy of God, is his Goodness extended to his sinful and guilty Creatures. It is an Affection and a Disposition in the Deity to compassionate the Miserable, to remit their Offences, and to receive them into Favour. And that God is thus affected towards his offending Creatures will appear, if we consider, that Mercy is a Branch of that universal Goodness of God, which at first inclined him to create the World and all Things in it, but especially Man, the  
most



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most excellent Being, and supreme Lord of this visible Creation. As nothing but the exuberant Goodness and overflowing Beneficence of the divine Nature, incited and conducted by his infinite Love of all Righteousness, at first inclined the Deity to make Man, and to endue him with all the Powers and Capacities of an immaterial and immortal Spirit; so nothing but the continual Exercise of the same divine Goodness towards his unworthy and provoking Creatures, which in other Words is what we call God's Mercy towards sinful Men, prevails with the Almighty to spare the World, and defer its Punishment, and to allow Men longer Time for their Repentance and Amendment of Life. God Almighty, who is all-sufficient and independent, and can receive no real Addition to his Happiness from any Work of his own Hands, could have no other Motive in creating the World, but the communicating Being and Happiness to his Creatures: And the Good and Benefit of the Creation is the great End he proposes to himself in continuing and preserving the World, and plentifully providing for all his Creatures in it, according to their several Conditions and Capacities; notwithstanding the Baseness and Degeneracy

cy and Impiety of Mankind, the most considerable Creature in it.

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It is owing to his Goodness and Mercy, that we live and move, and have our Being ; that we enjoy, not only the Necessaries and Conveniencies of Life, but all the Comforts and Satisfactions and Pleasures of it ; and that we are not immediately consumed by his Justice and Judgment, as we are all sensible we have deserved by our innumerable Sins and Wickedness, should God take Vengeance of us.

What but infinite Mercy could commiserate such unworthy Wretches ? What but infinite Mercy could pardon and forgive such ungrateful and impious Offenders ? What but infinite Mercy could be favourable and kind and beneficent to such vile and detestable, and such apostate Creatures ? *If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it ? But there is Mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be feared.*

And as Goodness and Mercy may be thus clearly demonstrated to be original and essential Properties of the divine Nature, upon the Principles of natural Reason only, unassisted with any Revelation ; so the Heathens had a very lively Sense of these divine Attributes from the bare  
Light

Light of Nature, as appears from several Testimonies of the wisest among them. *Seneca* is very full and expresse as to this particular in many of his Writings, especially in his fourth Book *de Beneficiis*, where he propounds the Gods for our Example and Imitation in shewing Mercy and doing Good: *Qui Beneficia infantibus dare incipiunt, ingratis perseverant*: Who begin to confer their Kindnesses upon us in our Infancy and Childhood, when we have no Knowledge of it; and persevere in their Beneficence towards us, when we are grown up, and are capable of acknowledging their Bounty, but ungratefully overlook and neglect it. *Etiam sceleratis Sol oritur, et Piratis patent Mariae*: Even the Sun riseth upon the Wicked, and the Seas are open to Pirates. And in another Place, he says, He that doth not acknowledge the Goodness and Mercy of the divine Nature, doth not take Notice of the general Custom among Men, of praying to God in their Distress, and making Vows both public and private; which would not be, unless they had this Persuasion well fixed within them, that God was ready to hear and to help them; and that he is in his own Nature propense to Kindness and Pity. *Nec in hunc Furorem omnes mortales consensissent*

*fissent alloquendi surda Numina et inefficaces*

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*Deos.* Nor would all Mankind so unanimously have agreed together in so great Madness of praying to such Deities, as they did not believe could either hear or help them. And to this purpose *Arrian* has a remarkable Passage in his Commentaries upon *Epietetus*, Lib. II. Chap. 7. Where he mentions *Κύριε ἐλέησον*, "Lord have mercy upon us," as an usual Form in the Prayers of the Heathen in his Time. Thus we read in *Virgil*, *Faune precor miserere*; and so *Horace*, in his *Carmen Sæculare*, *Conditor Mundi platusq; telo, supplices audi pueros Apollo*; *Syderum Regina bicornis audi, Luna Puellas*. All which Places, and many more, which might be produced, were it necessary, plainly show what Notions the Heathens had of the divine Mercy and Forgiveness.

And how this Attribute of the divine Mercy is extolled and magnified in holy Scripture, no Body, who hath ever looked into those sacred Books can be ignorant. God is said to delight in Mercy, and to rejoice over his People to do them Good. *2 Chron.*  
*The Lord your God is gracious and merciful.* *xxxiv. 9.*  
*Ready to pardon. All his Paths are Mercy.* *Neh. ix. 17.*  
*His Mercy is great unto the Heavens. Great* *Psal. xxv. 10.*  
*above the Heavens. The Earth is full of his* *lvii. 10.*  
*Mercy.* *4. cix. 644*



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Psal. cxlv.

8.

Exod.

xxxiv. 6, 7.

Psal. ciii. 8.

cxliv. 8.

Jonahiv. 2.

Joel iii. 13.

*Mercy. And his tender Mercies are over all his Works. When it pleased God to give the most perfect Description of himself, and descended in a Cloud to shew Moses his Glory, The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in Goodness and Truth; keeping Mercy for Thousands, forgiving Iniquities and Transgressions and Sins; and that will by no Means clear the Guilty, &c. Here indeed in the last Place God declares, he will by no Means clear the Guilty. But then it ought to be observed, that it follows after the fullest Declaration of his Mercy, and Forbearance, and Goodness, and Forgiveness of Iniquity and Transgression and Sin. Whence we may learn, that the Goodness and Mercy of God are his first and primary Perfections; and that it is only, when these are lost upon us and abused by us to our Encouragement in Sin and Wickedness, then he shows his Justice and Anger against us. And in innumerable other Places of holy Scripture, the Lord is declared to be a God full of Compassion and gracious, long-suffering, and slow to Anger, and plenteous in Mercy.*

Indeed the Scripture doth upon all Occasions speak of the Mercy of God with

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with the greatest Advantage, and extols it in the loftiest Expressions, as if it were the chief and supreme Perfection of the divine Nature; as it is the reigning and triumphant Excellence of the Deity in this World. It is to God's Mercy we owe our Freedom and Deliverance from those Evils and Misfortunes, which we see others labour under; that we fall not into those Dangers, our Life is continually exposed to; or that we are able to support ourselves under any Affliction and Calamity, which may befall us: But above all, it is owing to the divine Mercy, that we escape the Evil and Punishment of our heinous and provoking Sins; that we are not consumed in his great Wrath and heavy Displeasure; and that we still enjoy the blessed Opportunity of making our Peace with God by Repentance and Amendment of our Lives. Indeed it was owing to the eternal and essential Goodness and Mercy of the divine Nature, that, upon the Disobedience of our first Parents, God did not immediately destroy them, and with them the whole human Race, as he might justly have done, but provided a Remedy for their Fall, implied in the Words, *That the Seed of the Woman should bruise the Serpent's Head:*

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which Promise was repeated and more explicitly unfolded in many subsequent Predictions of a Redeemer, who should deliver Mankind out of the Hands of their Enemies, save them from their Sins, and from the Punishment due to them, and reconcile them to God. Out of Pity and Compassion to miserable and sinful Men, God at first designed the Plan of our Redemption, which in the Fulness of Time he executed by sending our Saviour into the World to set before us an Example of the most perfect Obedience, and at last to die for the Sins of his People. *For God so loved the World, that*

John iii. *he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever*  
16. *believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.* As supreme Lord and Governor of the World, to show his Righteousness, and perfect Hatred of all manner of Sin, God gave his only begotten Son to suffer Death upon the Cross for our Redemption, and his only begotten Son was pleased voluntarily and freely to undergo the cursed Death in our stead, and for our sakes; but it was the original Love of God to Man, that moved and inclined God to consider Man's sad and wretched Condition, when he lay under the Fear and Apprehension of God's fiery Indignation to devour him;

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*at this time God was pleased to manifest his Love towards us, by sending his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him. Behold what manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us! Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because Christ laid down his Life for us. Beloved, if God,* John iv.  
*so loved us, we ought also to love one another: If God hath been so merciful to us miserable Sinners, we ought also to show Mercy and Forgiveness towards one another. Which was the second Particular I proposed to discourse upon.*

II. The Obligations we are under to shew Mercy to one another. Among the several Arguments and Reasons, which might be urged for our shewing Mercy and Forgiveness towards one another, I shall mention only but two or three of the Chief, which will be sufficient to let us see the Reasonableness of this Duty. And to begin with a most powerful Argument and which alone would be of Force enough to prevail with us to practice this Precept, did we but give ourselves Time to examine the Weight of it, let it be considered, that the Forgiving of our Neighbour his Offences against ourselves, is by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles made an express



Condition of the Forgiveness of our Sins against God, without which all our Hopes of Mercy and Pardon from God are groundless and vain. This will be most evident to us all, if we do but observe the Lord's Prayer, wherein we are taught to pray to God to *forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us.* In which Petition we desire of God so to forgive our numberless and crying Sins against him, as we pardon all Offences against ourselves; and unless we do from our Hearts remit the Injuries we have received from one another, we beg of God in this Prayer not to forgive our Iniquities and Impieties against him. So that by our Implacableness and Unwillingness to forgive one another their Trespases, we turn this most excellent Petition of the divine Mercy and Goodness towards us into a most dreadful Imprecation of the Wrath of God against us, and call down from Heaven Judgment and Vengeance, when we approach the Throne of the heavenly Grace for Mercy and Forgiveness. And this plainly follows from the Reason and Enforcement of this Petition, which our blessed Saviour hath made in these Words; *If ye forgive Men their Trespases, your heavenly Father will also for-*

*forgive you. But if you forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases.*

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This Duty is illustrated also and in a particular Manner enforced by several Parables, which are described in the holy Gospels to engage us in the Practice of of it: As that of the good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, but most especially in that lively Parable and Description of the wicked Servant, to whom his Lord had forgiven ten thousand Talents. This Servant to whom so considerable a Debt had, at his humble Request, been remitted, meeting with his Fellow-servant, who owed him but one hundred Pence, immediately seized him, and took him by the Throat, and demanded his Debt. His poor Fellow-servant fell down and besought him to have Patience with him, and he would pay him all. And he would not, but went and cast him into Prison, till he should pay the Debt. When the Lord was told this, he sent for this cruel Wretch, and said unto him, O thou wicked Servant, I forgave thee all that Debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldst not thou also have had Compassion on thy Fellow servant, even as I had Pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the Tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. But the Application of this

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Parable ought never to be out of our Minds: *so likewise*, says our blessed Saviour, *shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your Hearts forgive not every one his Brother their Trespases.* I will mention only but one Text more of holy Scripture to this Purpose, with which I shall conclude this Head. *He shall have Judgment*, saith St James, *without Mercy, who hath shewed no Mercy.*

2d, Another Argument which may be urged with great Strength and Force to prevail upon us to be merciful to one another, is the Evil and Mischief of the contrary Practice. To be implacable and malicious and revengeful towards one another, is the most unhappy Condition of human Life in this World, and a most tormenting Ingredient in the eternal Misery of the next. The brute Beasts would lead a more happy and comfortable Life than Mankind, should Revenge and Cruelty be a general Practice amongst us. What Peace, what Enjoyment of ourselves could there be in a State of perpetual War and Bloodshed? Which would be the necessary Consequence of repeated Injuries and reiterated Revenges? For the Revenge of one Injury generally draws on another, and the

the Revenge of this a third; from whence ensues an endless Circulation of Injuries and Revenges. And it too often comes to pass, that a Man by demanding Satisfaction for one small Affront, brings on himself many more and greater, and while he is pushing to revenge these plunges himself into the Abyss of eternal Misery and Ruin. So that such a State of Nature as this, would be truly a most miserable State of War; and if Mankind were generally of such a Temper, and practised according to such Principles, Mr *Hobbes* had not been mistaken in his Definition of our natural State. But, blessed be God, human Nature is not so degenerate and corrupted, nor the Seeds of Humanity and Kindness, Mercy and Forgiveness, wholly extirpated out of the Minds of Men. We are naturally prone to love, and to do Good to one another, and enjoy the greatest Pleasure and Satisfaction ourselves, when we are promoting the Good and Welfare of others. A State of Nature is not a State of quarrelling and fighting, and destroying one another, but a Condition of Life in which, if we follow the Law of Nature, we shall always be inclinable to be friendly and kind and affectionate towards each other;  
and



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and the great Design of our most holy Religion, is to enforce and improve and perfect these natural Principles. So that our Duty is really most natural to us, and whatever is so, must necessarily be most pleasant. Acts of Kindness, and Humanity, and Mercy, are most agreeable and consonant to our Nature, and transport us with the most exquisite Joy and Delight. Whereas Ill-will, Envy and Hatred, Malice and Revenge, are all unnatural, and make us always uneasy. Our Souls swell and boil and are like the troubled Sea, which cannot rest, while we meditate Revenge. And tho' we may take some Pleasure in the Execution of it, this soon vanishes, and we are filled with Sorrow and Anguish and Remorse for what we have committed. We cannot imagine a more wretched Creature than an envious, malicious and a revengeful Person. Of such a Temper and Disposition are the Devils themselves, and so long as any Person is under the Influence and Power of such a Spirit, he anticipates the Misery of the Damned.

3d, Hatred and Revenge argue Impotence and Weakness of Mind, whereas Patience and Forbearance and Mercy are Arguments of a great and generous Spirit. For the more infirm and weak  
any

any Creature is, the sooner it is hurt and provoked, and the more ready to repel the Injury in the best manner it can.

This is true of all Creatures in general : and it is an Observation which *Plutarch* and *Seneca* and the wisest among the Heathens have long since made; and the Reasoning of *Juvenal*, though severe and satyrical, is too often confirmed by Experience; *Nempe minuti semper et infirmi est animi exiquiq; Voluptas, Ultio; continuo sic collige, quod Vindicta nemo magis gaudet quam Fœmina.* But on the contrary, Mercy and Forgiveness of Injuries is an Argument of the greatest Generosity and Excellency of Spirit, a most divine Virtue, and the Perfection of Goodness. This is a Disposition and Temper of Mind becoming Kings and Princes, in whom nothing is more excellent and glorious than Mercy and Clemency towards all, even their greatest Enemies, as far as is consistent with the public Good.

But to be merciful, and gracious, and kind, and beneficent towards all, even our greatest Enemies, is not only to imitate the best and wisest and greatest of Princes, but it is to resemble the great King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Almighty God; and that too in the brightest,

est, most amiable, and most glorious of his Attributes. This was the,

III. And last Consideration I proposed to urge, more particularly to prevail upon us sincerely and heartily to practice this Duty.

As the Happiness of Mankind consists in the Perfection of human Nature, and the more perfect any Man is, so much the more happy will he be; so the highest Advancement and Perfection of Humanity is the nearest Approach to, and Resemblance of the Divinity. But it is impossible for the Creature in several Respects to resemble the Creator; and it would be impious in us to aspire after an Imitation of God in his Attributes of Self-existence, Independency, Self-sufficiency, absolute Sovereignty, and some others.

There are other Attributes of the divine Nature, such as his Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence and the like, which it is not unlawful for us to imitate; but we are not commanded to resemble the Deity in these Perfections, because they may be abused by us, and made the Occasion of much Evil and Mischief in the World. But the sweeter and more benign Properties and Affections

tions of the divine Nature, such as his Goodness and Patience and Mercy, and in general all the moral Attributes of God, we are required and commanded to imitate according to the limited Measure and Finiteness of our Capacities; and in the nearest Imitation and Resemblance of these consists our greatest Perfection and Happiness.

In vain do the superstitious *Romanists* make to themselves idolatrous Images of the divine Nature, and impiously mislead their ignorant Followers and Votaries by impossible and contradictory Representations of the Deity; would they form in their Minds the most glorious and brightest Ideas of God, and propound to themselves the most perfect Example for their Imitation, let them describe the infinite Goodness and Mercy of God, and study to resemble him in those most excellent Perfections. These are the most glorious Attributes of the Deity, these we are most strictly commanded to imitate, and in the Imitation of these our greatest Glory and Happiness consist. And great Reason have we to be in love with and admire these Excellencies of the divine Nature, without which we must  
all



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all have been infinitely miserable for ever. Had not the divine Mercy interposed and provided for us a Remedy for the Wound we received by the Fall of our first Parents, we had been subjected and condemned to Sin and Death and Misery to all Eternity. Where could we have found Means of Redress? What Hopes could we have conceived of a Reconciliation? Whom in Heaven or Earth could we have substituted for our Mediator? It was not in our Power so much as to have devised, or thought of the manner of our Salvation, much less effected it, when it pleased God, out of his infinite Mercy, in his own good Time, to send his only begotten Son into the World to take our Nature upon him, and to offer himself up a Sacrifice for our Sin.

What Words can express such infinite Goodness, or be able to set forth such undeserved Mercy, that God should not only remit to us our Sins, and forgive all our Offences, but that he should receive us again into Favour, and restore us to a better Condition than we were in before, if by our Disobedience and Ingratitude we be not so foolish and mad to forfeit a second Time our Happiness? And how good and gracious hath

hath God been to us not only to provide for us a Saviour and Redeemer, who should instruct our Ignorance, and teach us the Way of Peace and everlasting Felicity, by the most excellent Precepts that were ever delivered to Mankind; but also to send a Comforter to us to guide and lead us into all Truth, and to assist us in our spiritual Warfare against all the Power and Force of our Adversaries? What dull and stupid Creatures must we be, if we are insensible of such boundless Mercy? How dear ought the Memory of it to be to us? What Returns can we make for such infinite Goodness? Surely the Consideration of such inestimable Love must engage us to imitate it, and to show Love and Kindness, Patience and Forbearance, and Forgiveness towards one another. Hear what St *John* saith upon this Subject, *Beloved, let us love one another: For Love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God. In this was manifested the Love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the World that we might live through him. Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a Propitiation for our Sins.*  
*Beloved,*

*1 John iv.  
7, 8, 9, 10,  
11.*

Serm. *Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to*  
 XIV. *love one another.*

Can the good God, who is offended and provoked every Day by the crying Sins and Impieties of Men, bear without Impatience with such and so many impious Offenders, and not only so, but likewise take care of them and provide for them, that they lack nothing; and canst not thou bear with the Sins of thine offending Brother? Thou, that art so great a Sinner thyself? That Man must be ignorant of his own Sins, and how much he stands in need of Forgiveness from God, who is unwilling to show Mercy to his Brother. Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, Long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man have a Quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore Followers of God as dear Children. Which that all of us may be, God of his infinite Mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Col. iii.

12, 13.

Eph iv.

32. v. 2.

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## S E R M O N   X V .

Of our imitating the Holiness of  
God.

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I. P E T E R   I . 16.

*Be ye holy, for I am holy.*

**T**HE many and great Miracles of  
our blessed Saviour and his A-  
postles, their Lives and Conver-  
sations, and the exact Completion of the  
several Prophecies in the Old Testament,  
were all convincing Evidences and Proofs  
of their divine Mission and Authority.  
But the Design and Tendency of the  
Revelation made by them, the Excellen-  
cy of their Doctrine, and Sublimity of  
their Precepts, were still further Proofs  
and Arguments of the Truth and Cer-  
tainty of the Christian Religion, and a  
U clear

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clear Demonstration, that so holy an Institution must necessarily proceed from the holiest of Authors.

Now the great End and Design of Christianity is to renew in Man the Image of God, the Pattern and Likeness after which he was first made; and to raise and advance Humanity to the highest possible Pitch of Perfection and Happiness by a Participation of the Divinity. To this Purpose are all the Precepts of our most holy Religion; with this View are we commanded to be Imitators of God, as dear Children, that we may be Partakers of a divine Nature; and for this very Reason does *St Peter* propound to us the Resemblance of God's Holiness in the Words of my Text, *Be ye holy, for I am holy.*

In which Words we are very expressly commanded to be holy, and that for this Reason, because God is holy: And in discoursing upon them I shall,

I. Endeavour to demonstrate the Holiness of God, both upon Principles of natural Reason, and from express Testimonies of holy Scripture. And,

II. Enforce the Duty contained in them which is incumbent upon us, that as  
God

*Of our imitating the Holiness of God.*

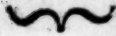
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God is holy, so we should study to be likewise holy.

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But before I begin to discourse upon these two Particulars, I will define what Holiness in general is: For though it be an Expression, which very frequently occurs in the inspired Authors, yet the true Notion of it seems not rightly to be understood by the Generality of Readers. Holiness sometimes is attributed to Persons and Things, as dedicated and consecrated to holy Offices and Uses; thus the *Jewish* Priests are called holy, and their Vestments and the Vessels of the Temple are said to be holy. But as this is only a relative and an external Holiness, not an inherent and real Quality either in the Persons or Things themselves, I shall not take any further notice of it; but confine my Discourse to the true and real Virtue and Quality of Holiness. In this Sense Holiness in general, when applied to free Agents and intelligent Beings, is a Separation from Sin and Vice and moral Imperfection. And in particular the Holiness of God, who is the adequate Idea, and perfect Pattern of all Virtue, is the infinite Distance and Remove of the divine Nature from all Sin and moral Evil.


 This Notion indeed of Holiness is properly negative, but doth imply in it something positive. For as it signifies the Absence of all Sin, so it imports the the Presence of all Goodness, that is, all the moral Attributes and Perfections of the divine Nature. So that by the Holiness of God we are to understand, not only that he is infinitely removed from all Sin and Vice and Impurity, such as Envy, Hatred, Malice, Revenge, Cruelty, Intemperance, Lust, Unclean-ness, Injustice, Oppression, Tyranny, Unfaithfulness, Deceit and Falshood, and the like; but also, that he is possessed in the most transcendent degree of all the opposite Virtues, such as Love, Kind-ness, Goodness, Mercy, Patience, For-bearance, Justice, Truth, Faithfulness, and all other the Graces and Perfections, which are generally called the moral At-tributes of the divine Nature.

And as the Holiness of God consists in the supreme Excellency of the divine Na-ture, whereby he is infinitely removed from all Evil and Sin; so the Holiness of all rational Creatures, and of Man in par-ticular, is properly defined to be a Sepa-tion from Vice and Sin, and a Confor-mity to the Holiness of God. And therefore the divine Holiness is set be-fore

fore us, as an Example, which we are commanded to imitate, that as God is holy, so we might be likewise holy.

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Having thus defined what Holiness in general is, and shewn from the true and proper Notion of it, that it is the Sum and Comprehension of all Virtue, that I may the more clearly demonstrate the Holiness of the divine Nature, I shall observe this Method;

I. I will consider the Ground and Foundation of all Virtue, which is the eternal and essential Difference of Good and Evil.

II. Observe, what this essential Difference of Good and Evil is in itself, so it must appear to the Mind of all intelligent Beings, and be the constant and never-failing Rule of all their Actions, if their Understanding be not darkened, nor their Wills depraved by some corrupt Affection, mistaken Interest, or unreasonable Lust and Passion: And consequently, that God Almighty who is Omniscient, and Omnipotent, Self-sufficient and Independent, must for ever act according to this eternal and immutable Difference of Good and Evil; and therefore must be a Being infinitely removed from all Evil, and for ever



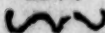
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incapable of acting contrary to the  
Rules of everlasting Righteousness and  
true Holiness.

I. I will consider the eternal and immutable Difference of Good and Evil. That there are manifest Differences and Properties of Things, is as certain, as that different Things exist; and that from thence there arise different Relations and Proportions of Things, is as evident, as the Demonstration of any Proposition in Geometry or Arithmetic. Further, that there are different Relations and Dependences of Persons, is as plain as that there are different Conditions and Stations of Persons in the World. And consequently, there must be a certain Suitableness and Unsuitableness of applying different Circumstances according to the Condition and Qualification of Persons. Which suiting of Circumstances according to the Condition of Persons is the Rule and Measure of Action to all intelligent and just Beings, the Foundation of all Morality, and the eternal Law, by which God governs himself in all his Dispensations towards his Creatures; and which his Creatures ought to observe in the Performance of their Duties towards him, their great Creator, and towards

wards one another, their fellow Creatures. And be it observed, that what I have said concerning the different Properties and Qualities of Persons and Things, actually existing, is equally true of their Ideas only, whether the Persons and Things themselves exist, or not. And as these Ideas existed in the divine Mind from all Eternity, so did likewise their Properties and Dependences; from which Properties there arising a Rule and Reason of Action to all intelligent Beings, this Rule must likewise be eternal: And all Virtue and Morality, being founded on this Rule, must also be eternal and immutable, and all our Obligations to the Practice of Virtue indispensable.

The Properties and Proportions of Magnitude are the Subject of the whole Science of Geometry, which is nothing else but a Contemplation on the different Affections of Lines and Figures, in order to demonstrate their more remote and abstruse Properties from those more plain and obvious. The essential Difference and Affections of Numbers is the Subject of Arithmetic, which Art is wholly taken up in the Knowledge of their Properties, by investigating new and unknown Affections from a Comparison of what are known. Now as the Re-

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lations and Proportions of Numbers and Geometrical Figures are essentially different, eternal, and immutable, so are the several Differences and Dependences, which flow from the Nature and Qualities of all other Things, and of Persons likewise, constant and invariable, and eternally the same; because this was from all Eternity true of their Ideas, which were the Patterns and Archetypes in the divine Intellect, after which all Things were at first made: And from the Contemplation and Knowledge of these Relations, as far as they concern the Actions of free Agents and rational Beings, all the Principles of Virtue and Morality are to be derived. And from hence it appears, that the Truth and Certainty of all moral Duties are as clearly and strictly to be demonstrated from Principles indisputable and self-evident, as the Theorems and Problems in Mathematics are deducible from their Postulata and Axioms. But further, as in Mechanics, which is a Science, that teacheth how to move any given Weight with any given Power, all the Operations are grounded upon this first Principle, that the Moments of the Bodies are in a Ratio compounded of their several Magnitudes and reciprocal Distances from the

the Center of Gravity ; so in Morality, our Duties and Offices may most certainly be demonstrated from the Consideration of the different Relations and Respects, which Persons bear to one another, and by suiting accordingly different Circumstances to them.

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For that, according to the different Relations Persons bear to one another, there arise different Obligations, is a Principle as self-evident, as any Axiom whatever. For Instance : Because God is infinite, self-sufficient, and independent, the Creator and Author of the whole Universe ; and because we his Creatures are finite, dependent, and owe ourselves, and all that we have to his Goodness and Bounty, it is most certainly our Duty to honour and worship him, to render him Thanks for all the Benefits conferred upon us, to obey and imitate him in all our Actions.

And as God is the great Creator and Governor of the World and all Things in it, Omniscient, Almighty, and Irresistible it is most apparently just and right, that he should rule and govern the World according to infinite Knowledge and Wisdom, direct all Events in it to the general Good of the Whole ; and that none of his Creatures should  
be



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be eternally and extremely miserable, without any Fault or Demerit of their own; but that all of them should be placed and preserved in a State easy and happy, in which they should continue during the divine Pleasure, unless they forfeited their Condition by their Ingratitude and Disobedience. For there cannot possibly be a greater Contradiction and Absurdity, than that God should make an innocent Being miserable. It is fit and requisite in the Nature and Reason of Things, that God should design the Good and Happiness of his Creatures; and as he cannot be supposed ignorant of the eternal Reasons of Good and Evil, so he must direct all his Actions according to them. Which is the,

II. Thing I am to discourse upon. And this is a necessary Consequence upon the Supposition of the natural Attributes of God; and will be evident to all, who will duly consider the infinite Wisdom and Knowledge of God, his Self-sufficiency, Omnipotence and Independency. For as God is Omniscient he cannot be ignorant of the natural and necessary Relations of Things, and as he is Independent, Self-sufficient, and Omnipotent, he cannot be biassed by any Interest,

terest, or swayed by any wrong Affection, or over-ruled by any Power in any of his Actions according to these necessary Relations of Things. So that it is impossible his Understanding should be imposed upon in any Thing, or his Will perverted by any Thing; and therefore he must necessarily know the essential Differences of Good and Evil, and most constantly will and chuse to act always according to them. For all Error and Mistake in these Matters, all Deviations from these eternal Laws of Good and Evil, proceed either from Shortness of Understanding, Defect of Power, or Depravity of Will. But it is impossible that any of these Imperfections should take place in God. His Knowledge is infallible, his Power irresistible, and his Will absolutely free, and therefore his Judgment of Things must be always right, and his Actions good. God must certainly be Good, because being All-sufficient he must be infinitely removed from all Envy and Malice, which proceed from Want, Weakness, or Corruption. God must be strictly Just, because he perfectly knows the eternal Rules of Justice and Equity, hath absolute Power to act according to them, and can be under no Temptation to deviate

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viate in the least therefrom. God must be Faithful and True, because it is impossible he should be imposed upon himself, nor is it possible he should deceive others; for all Deceit and Falshood arise either from Rashness or Forgetfulness, Inconstancy or Impotency, Fear of Evil, or Hope of Gain; from all which an infinitely wise, powerful, and independent Being, such as God is, must be infinitely removed. In a Word, all moral Evil and Imperfection proceeding either from Shortness of Power, Want of Knowledge or Depravation of Will, which are inconsistent with the natural Perfections of God, it necessarily follows, that as God is infinitely removed from all moral Evil, so is he most fully possessed of all moral Good: that is, God is infinitely holy, in the true Notion and Definition of the Word.

Thus the best and wisest among the Heathens themselves apprehended God to be, as appears from the Forms of Prayer in use among them, in which they frequently ascribed Holiness to the Deity, they worshipped. Hence we meet with in the most celebrated Authors among them these Expressions, *Sancte Pater!* *Sancte Jupiter!* *Sancte Apollo!* and many others to the same purpose.

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And agreeably hereunto are innumerable Passages in sacred Writ, wherein Holiness is either expressly ascribed to God, or, which is the same Thing, all moral Imperfection removed from him.

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Thus, *Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongst the Gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in Holiness. The Knowledge of the holy One is Understanding. That we might be Partakers of his Holiness. Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.* The following Texts remove all Evil and moral Imperfection from God. *God cannot be tempted with Evil. Doth God pervert Judgment, or doth the Almighty pervert Justice? Far be it from God, that he should do Wickedness, and from the Almighty, that he should commit Iniquity; yea, surely, God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert Judgment. Is there then Unrighteousness with God? God forbid. The Strength of Israel will not lie. These Things saith he, that is holy; he, that is true.* I come now,

Exod. xv.  
11.

Prov. ix.

10.

Heb. xii.

10.

Isa. vi. 3.

Rev. iv. 8.

Jam. i. 13.

Job viii. 3.

xxxiv. 10.

12.

Rom. ix.

14.

Sam. xv.

29.

Rev. iii. 7.

II. To consider the Obligations we are under to be holy as God is holy. I will mention only but these three.

1st, The Agreeableness of this Duty to our natural Reason and unprejudiced Judgment of Things.

2d,



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2d, To be holy is the great End and Design of the Christian Religion.

3d, Holiness is the greatest Improvement and Advancement of our Natures, our Perfection and Happiness.

1st, The Reasonableness of this Duty will very plainly appear, if we consider how becoming and fitting it is, that the same eternal Reason of Things according to which God Almighty governs for ever all his Actions should be the Rule and Measure in all Cases, according to which we should chuse to act.

As it hath pleased God out of his infinite Goodness and Kindness to make us free and intelligent Beings, like himself; so certainly it must be his Will and Pleasure, that we should study to be like him in the Exercise of this Understanding, and use of our Freedom. We are indued with a reasoning and discerning Faculty, and are capable of knowing the natural Differences of Good and Evil, and consequently, in all our Actions our Wills ought to be governed always according to those Differences. And it is as natural and reasonable that our Wills should be determined constantly by our Knowledge and Judgment; as it is necessary, that we must give our Assent

sent to whatever we perfectly know and clearly understand. There is only this Difference, that as we are free Agents, we can chuse to act as we please, but we cannot know and understand the Nature and Reason of Things to be what we please.

The Reasons of Good and Evil are fixt and unalterable, and our Assent to them is unavoidable, but still we have a Power of acting contrary to what we know and approve. And this must be so, as we are made free Creatures, and capable of acting as we please. But it is a strange Absurdity, that our Wills should be determined contrary to our Reason and Understanding and Judgment. This is as great a Contradiction in Morality, as it is in Physics for a Body to move contrary to the settled Laws of Motion. For would we lay aside our Prejudices and our Vices, our false Interests, and prevailing Lusts and Passions, what can be more plain and evident, than that our Wills and Actions ought to be determined by the Reason and Nature of Things; and that the same Reason of Things, with regard to which the Will of God always chuses to act, what is agreeable to  
Good-

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Goodness, Justice, and Truth, ought to be the constant Rule by which we and all other rational Beings should govern all our Actions for the Good and Benefit of the World in our respective Places and Stations? This is manifestly our Duty, herein we resemble our great Creator and best Benefactor, the supreme Lord and Governor of the Universe; and for this Purpose God hath made that most gracious Revelation of himself by his only begotten Son Jesus Christ; that we might imitate God in the Purity and Perfection of his Nature, in the eternal Rectitude of his Will; and that we might *be holy, as he is holy.* Which brings me to the second Argument I proposed to mention, why we should endeavour after Holiness; namely,

2d, That to be holy is the great End and Design of the Christian Religion. When our blessed Saviour came down from Heaven and was made Man, his Intention was, not only to make Expiation of Sin, and to reconcile us to God by his sufferings and Death in our stead; but for this Reason chiefly gave he himself for us, *that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works.* Which is the Account

Tit. ii.  
14.

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St Paul gives us of Christ's appearing in the World. And for this Purpose, saith St *John*, *was the Son of God manifested in the World, that he might destroy the Works of the* <sup>Serm. XV.</sup> *Devil.* <sup>i John iii.</sup>

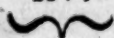
The same Reason Zacharias gives us of our Lord's coming into the World, *That we being delivered out of the Hands of our Enemies might serve him without Fear* <sup>Lukei. 74,</sup> *in Holiness and Righteousness before him all* <sup>75.</sup>

*the Days of our Life.* And St Peter affirms the same Thing in Effect: *Unto you first, saith he, God having raised up his Son Jesus sent him to bless you, in turn- ing away every one of you from his Iniquities.* <sup>Acts iii. 26.</sup>

From all which Places it plainly appears, that the great End of Christ's coming into the World was to restore in Man the Image of God, *that being renewed in the Spirit of our Mind, we might put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness.* This was the Design of our Saviour's whole Life and Conversation, hither tended all his Doctrines and Precepts; into this may be resolved the whole Gospel, every Article of Faith, every Promise and Threatning; as might be shewn at large, if either the Time, or your Patience would permit.

For Christian Religion is a practical Institution; As it presents us with the  
X most





most sublime and exalted Precepts, and sets before us the best and most perfect Examples of all Virtue and Holiness; so it requires of us the sincerest and most hearty Endeavours to observe all its most holy Commands, and to imitate as near as possible the great Examples it proposes to us. Its chief End is to make us, not so much wiser, as better men; and all its Doctrines refer to Practice, and are so much the more valuable, as they are necessary and useful.

The Schoolmen indeed have wrote much about the Original of the Soul, concerning the Orders and Degrees and Number of Angels; about the Extent and Capacity, the Figure and Limits of Heaven, but of these Things the inspired Writers say but little; because these nice Speculations would be but of little Use to us: We might be very knowing in these Matters, but not a Jot the better and happier Men. But of Righteousness and true Holiness the sacred Pages are full, these are described and explained at large, in the recommending and extolling of these the holy Penmen delight, and in the Exercise and Practice of these our highest Perfection and Happiness consists. Which was the last Argument I proposed to use, as an Obligation

tion and Engagement upon us to the Practice of Righteousness and true Holiness.

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III. And this will be evident, if we consider, that Holiness is required of us, not only as a Condition, upon which eternal Life and Blessedness are promised in holy Scripture, but that it is itself an essential and principal Ingredient of Happiness. Holiness is the very Frame and Temper of a rational Being requisite to make it happy. Without it all other Things would contribute but little to the Happiness of a reasonable Creature, indeed they could not secure it from being miserable. For Happiness consists chiefly in the Temper and Disposition of our Minds, and according to the Qualities our Souls are endued with our State and Condition is happy or miserable. If Virtue and Goodness is the Habit and Disposition of our Minds, we are in Possession of Happiness in the Main; but if Wickedness and Vice have the Rule and Dominion over us, we cannot avoid being miserable. For as the Happiness of any Being is always proportionable and adequate to the Perfection of its Nature, so its Misery is always answerable to its Imperfection: And therefore

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as Holiness is the chief Perfection of a rational Soul, it must necessarily be its highest Happiness; and as Sin is its greatest Imperfection, it must consequently be its extremest Misery.

That Holiness is the highest Perfection of human Nature is manifest, because it is the supreme Excellency of the divine Nature; and the utmost Perfection of Humanity consists in its nearest Approach to the Divinity. But in nothing are we more capable of resembling the Deity, than in real Virtue and true Holiness; which as it chiefly constitutes the Glory and Happiness of God; so in it most especially consists the Excellency and Happiness of Man.

God is the Source and Fountain of all Glory and Blessedness, and the more like any Being is to him, the more glorious and blessed it is. But in nothing can we so much imitate the Splendor and Brightness of God, as in Virtue and Goodness; and in nothing can we so much partake of his Blessedness as in Righteousness and true Holiness. And the more holy we are while we live here on Earth, the more we enjoy of the Happiness of Heaven, and anticipate the Joy of the Blessed.

For Heaven is not so much a Place, as a State of Blessedness; and this State is the

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the Condition of the Mind, wherein it hath attained the utmost Purity and Holiness. The Beatific Vision does not consist in an idle gazing upon the Perfections of God; but in an Assimilation of our Nature to his divine Nature, in an exact Conformity of our Mind to his Mind, in the Unity of our Will and Disposition, and in a Communion of the same divine Virtues and Qualities, which are all signified and comprehended in the general Term Holiness. *Without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord; and therefore, as he which hath called us is holy, so let us be holy in all manner of Conversation: Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy. And God grant we may all study to be holy, and so be for ever blessed, in and through the Merits of his most dearly beloved Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. To whom be, &c.*





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## S E R M O N XVI.

Of the Origin and Sinfulness of  
our Thoughts.

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MATTHEW XV. 19.

*Out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts.*

**T**HE best and most acceptable Serm.  
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Service we can render to Almighty God, is the Service and Obedience of our Hearts to his divine Will and Pleasure; and therefore our blessed Saviour, when the Scribes and Pharisees accused him of transgressing the Tradition of the Elders, exposes their Hypocrisy and Unrighteousness with this Answer, *Why do you also transgress the Commandment of God by your Tradition?* Instancing in the fifth Commandment, which they had made of none Effect

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by their Tradition: And then he tells them plainly, they were the Hypocrites *Isaiah* prophesied of, saying, *This People draweth nigh unto me with their Mouth, and and honoureth me with their Lips, but their Heart is far from me.* These blind Leaders of the Blind taught the Multitude, that the Substance of Religion consisted in outward Forms and Ceremonies, and therefore no Wonder, if both they and their Followers fall into the Ditch: But our blessed Lord on the contrary instructed his Disciples, that the Sincerity of their Hearts was the best Sacrifice they could offer unto God; because those Things which come forth from an insincere and impure Heart, they defile the Man. *For out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, &c.*

The Heart is generally supposed in holy Scripture to be the Seat of all our Thoughts and Affections and so signifies the same with our Souls, and therefore by the Thoughts of the Heart we are to understand all the Motions and Operations of our Minds; and in discoursing upon the Words of my Text, I shall,

I. Consider the Origin of our Thoughts in general.

II. Show

II. Show how far they are sinful, and wherein their Sinfulness consists. Serm.  
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III. Lay down some Rules and Directions for the good Government of them.

I. As to the Origin of our Thoughts, It is now, I think generally agreed, that their first Rise is from Sensation, that is, the Impressions external Objects make on our Senses; which Impressions being conveyed by Means of our Senses to our Minds, we thereby perceive the Objects themselves, and form within us Ideas of their several Qualities and Properties; and these Ideas are the Objects of that thinking Substance within us, which we call the Soul, about which Ideas all our Thoughts are always employed, and without which it is impossible we should ever think.

This indeed is a Matter purely Philosophical, but as it is confirmed by Experience, and generally agreed upon by the wisest and most judicious Philosophers, who have made it their Business and Study to make the accuratest Observations about the Operations of their own Minds, I lay it down for a certain Truth. The Spring therefore and Fountain of all our Thoughts derives originally from our Senses. When external  
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Objects are presented to us, they naturally move and affect our Senses, and these Motions are communicated by the Organs of our Bodies to the Mind, which is made sensible of them, and begins to perceive their several Effects, whence the Mind forms Ideas of the several Qualities of those Bodies, which were the Occasion of those Perceptions in itself. These Ideas are the Objects of our Understanding, about which alone the Mind is conversant in all its Thoughts of the innumerable Things it meets with to entertain itself in the World.

The Mind of Man, however soaring and boundless in its Thoughts, hath not so much as one Perception in it, which was not either directly derived from the Senses or formed from the Observation the Mind makes upon its own Operations about sensible Objects. If we will give ourselves Time to observe how the Mind becomes furnished with all its Thoughts, Experience will teach us, that the Mind at first seems like a Sheet of clear white Paper, free from any Characters wrote upon it by the Finger of God, endowed only with a Power and Capacity of receiving and retaining the Impression external Objects make on it by Means of the Senses, and  
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of perceiving their peculiar and several Qualities thereby; from whence it forms to itself Ideas of those Objects, and by variously comparing these together, and by reflecting on itself in these Operations it stocks itself with all that Multitude and Variety of Thoughts we find within us. The Truth of all which we may experience by observing the gradual Progress we make in Thinking, from the first Glimmering of Thought in our Infancy till we come to the full and perfect use of our Reason and Understanding. But I refer the Curious in this Matter to the Books upon this Subject.

Sensation I make the first Source of our Thoughts in general, as it is the Occasion of those Thoughts we have by Reflection; of which I should now speak, but first beg Leave to make a few Observations upon what hath been said already.

1. I observe, that the Impression external Objects make on our Senses, and the Perceptions which thereby are excited in our Minds, are natural, and generally speaking necessary, so that the Mind is passive in this Case, and cannot help being sensible of the Objects presented to it, and forming Ideas of their proper Qualities. God Almighty hath formed  
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our Minds, not only capable of perceiving sensible Objects, but also hath made it natural to us to have a Sensation of them; so that as often as we meet with them our Minds are generally sensible of their Effects.

2d, It hath pleased God not only to endow our Minds with this Capacity of Perception, and to make Sensation necessary to us, but for good and wise Ends he hath annexed to our Sensation several Degrees of Pleasure or Pain; so that we do not simply perceive the Properties and Qualities of Things about us, but at the same Time we receive from them either Pleasure or Pain. Those Objects, which are grateful and agreeable to our Minds naturally excite in us Pleasure and Delight; on the contrary Objects ungrateful and disagreeable to us as naturally raise in us Uneasiness and Pain. Hence we become naturally delighted with Beauty, Harmony, Fragrancy, and all the other agreeable Qualities of sensible Objects; and have as naturally an Aversion to their contrary Qualities.

3d, But though we are thus naturally affected by external sensible Objects, and receive from them either Pleasure or Pain, and consequently are excited to de-  
fire

fire and pursue pleasurable Things, and to avoid and fly from painful ; yet we are not necessarily determined to Action by either of them. We cannot help having pleasing or displeasing Sensations of the several Things about us, and we frequently perceive ourselves strongly solicited and excited to Action by them, but to comply with these Solicitations is generally in our Power. For our Minds are made by God capable not only of receiving pleasing or displeasing Sensations from external Objects, but we have a Power of Reflection likewise, whereby we can observe the Motions and Operations of our own Minds, and consider their Tendency and Consequence. But this brings me,

II. To take notice of the other Source of our Thoughts, namely, the Reflection of the Mind upon its own Operations. When external Objects are presented to us, they naturally affect our Senses, and excite in our Minds Sensations correspondent and peculiar to their several Natures and Qualities: Hence the Mind becomes sensible of the Objects themselves, and by observing the different Motions and Operations of itself at the same Time forms to itself distinct Ideas of the  
diverse



diverse Manner of its Actions and Affections. From this Notice the Mind takes of its several Operations about external sensible Objects we come to have the Ideas of judging, reasoning, knowing, willing, choosing, and all the other different Modes of Thinking about the various Objects of our Understanding.

This Reflection of the Mind upon itself, in its different State, as it is conversant about the different Objects of our Senses is the other Spring of our Ideas, which we therefore call Ideas of Reflection, to distinguish them from the other Sort of Ideas, which derive immediately from Sensation. But in general Sensation and Reflection are the two great Springs and Sources of all our Ideas. Thus much about the Origin of our Thoughts in general. But before I leave this Head, I desire it may be observed,

1<sup>st</sup>, That the Soul is endowed not only with a Power of observing and taking notice of its own Motions and Operations, and of reflecting upon its own Nature and Capacity ; but further, that the Mind of Man is a free Principle, and is able to judge, reason, and deliberate about its own Actions, and to reflect on the Nature and Consequences of them ;  
and

and can restrain itself from acting, till it hath duly weighed and considered the several Circumstances of the Action; and after all when it determines itself to act, it acts freely and voluntarily, not out of any Compulsion nor by Necessity. And in this Power of restraining the Motions of our Bodies, till we have maturely considered the Nature and Tendency of the Action, and then freely and deliberately consented to it, consists the Excellency and Superiority of our Nature, above brute Beasts, who are governed wholly by Sense, and act by Instinct, without any regard to the Morality of the Action: And in this Freedom and Liberty of Choice in our several Actions lies the Nature and Foundation of all Virtue and Vice. But,

2d, Let it be observed, that as we, like other Animals, are affected by external sensible Objects with pleasing or painful Sensations, and are strongly incited to Action by them, though not constrained thereto, as other animate Creatures naturally are; so to comply with these natural Solicitations and Desires, is not only lawful, but our Duty, where no Reason of a higher Nature and of a more excellent Kind can be truly alledged to the contrary. But then in  
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all Cases our Actions ought to be under the Guidance and Direction of our Reason and Judgment; otherwise we degenerate and sink into the Order of brute Creatures, who are governed by Instinct and Appetite only, without Reason and a moral Sense. But when our natural Inclinations and Desires are directed and regulated by our Judgment and Conscience, from purely natural Actions they become Moral, and what in irrational Creatures is only Nature and Instinct, in ourselves is a moral Duty and a Virtue.

3d, But then as we are reasonable Creatures, as well as sensitive, we ought to consider the Nature and Reason of Things, and not suffer ourselves to be hurried on to Action by our Affections and Passions out of Sight of our Reason; but as we are capable of enjoying both a rational and a sensible Good, and in Case of Competition rational Good is upon many Accounts highly to be preferred before sensible; so we may in many Instances very justly and wisely forego the Gratification of a sensual Desire for the Enjoyment of a higher rational Pleasure. And the Pursuit of a Superior rational Good will justify the Neglect of a sensual Enjoyment, even though our natural Desires and Inclinations may rise up and oppose

oppose it. I might instance in many Cases, in which these Principles have their Use, but the Application of what I have said I leave every one to make in particular to himself. The Substance of the Matter is briefly this. That we are all subject to the like Desires and Inclinations, the Gratification of which in an innocent and regular Way is not only lawful, but often our Duty; but still there may be higher Reasons, which may make the Denial of our Inclinations and Appetites, not only eligible, but highly preferable and commendable, and a very eminent Virtue.

II. I come now to consider how far our Thoughts are sinful, and wherein their Sinfulness consists. And as a Foundation of what I shall say upon this Point, I lay down this Principle, that nothing can or will be imputed to us as a Sin, which it was not in our Power to prevent or hinder. We must conceive very false and unworthy Notions of God Almighty, if we can believe he hath imposed upon any of his Creatures such Conditions of Duty and Obedience, which it is impossible for them to perform; or that he hath made his Will and Pleasure, and consequently our Homage and Worship



so difficult to be understood, that after all our Endeavours to serve and please Him, we shall at last miscarry and be deprived of the Light of his Countenance, and with the disobedient and rebellious Spirits thrust down into outward Darkness, where shall be nothing but *weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth*. No, God is no such hard Taskmaster, as to require Brick where there is no Straw, but he hath made our Duty easy, pleasant, and delightful to us; unless by our Folly, Vices, and Wickedness we render it irksome and painful to ourselves. Never therefore let us imagine we shall incur God Almighty's Displeasure for what we could no Way avoid, nor be frightened with the Denunciations of Hell and Damnation from the Mouths of Men, when we know our own Innocence and Integrity; for if we be but sincerely willing and careful to please God, as far as it is in our Power, we are assured God accepteth our willing Minds, and will never condemn us for what we could not help. Now to apply this general Doctrine to our particular Case.

Let any Man seriously and impartially consider human Nature, and that he may not err and be deceived by proceeding  
upon

upon Conjecture and Hypothesis, instead of Experience and Matter of Fact, let him propose himself, as an Example to make Observation and Trial upon, for, generally speaking, I suppose human Nature the same in all Mankind; let a Man, I say, observe the Motions and Workings of his own Breast, and he will find many Desires and Inclinations of his Heart natural and unavoidable, some of which it is impossible for him to subvert and live without satisfying; other Inclinations there are equally natural, but upon which the Subsistence and Welfare of the Individual does not equally depend, which may be resisted and subdued with Care and Conduct, or they may be innocently gratified in a lawful Way, at the Choice generally speaking of ourselves.

Now upon Experience we shall find, that external Objects do more or less excite these natural Inclinations and Affections, and that our Senses do convey into our Minds the Fuel of that Fire, that lies latent in our Breasts; and that such and such Sensations are naturally attended with corresponding Thoughts and Affections, so that upon the Presentment of some Objects to our Fancies

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we often necessarily and unavoidably conceive some particular Thoughts and Affections.

Now as far as these Thoughts are raised in our Minds naturally and unavoidably by the several Objects we cannot help meeting with, while we live and converse in the World; so far are they innocent and harmless, and cannot be imputed to us as Sins, because they cannot be prevented by us, and are not in our Power to govern, though in themselves and their Tendency they may be irregular, and to indulge them would be contrary to God's express Word and Commandment.

Thus much therefore in general may be concluded from what hath been already said, that sudden Thoughts may spring up in our Minds, without our Consent and against our Will and at present ungovernable, and not immediately to be prevented or stifled, which may be in themselves forbidden, and very dangerous if indulged and caressed, but which will not be charged to our Account as Sins, because out of our Power, and upon the Principle we at first laid down nothing can or will be laid to our Charge as a Sin, which we could not avoid.

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For further, I beg leave to advance another Principle, as an undoubted Truth in this Case, that in all moral Actions and Instances of Duty and Obedience the Concurrence of the Will is absolutely necessary to determine the Nature and Quality of them. So that no moral Action against our Will can be either praise-worthy or culpable; for Virtue and Vice do depend upon the Uprightness or Obliquity of the Will. The Will must first be supposed to be free, otherwise there is no such Thing in Nature as Virtue or Vice, no Religion, no Promises nor Threatnings, no Rewards nor Punishments in this or the other World.

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And further, upon the Supposition of the Liberty and Freedom of our Will, the Concurrence of it is required in every moral Action; for else it ceases to be moral, and becomes either natural or necessary; and in either Case not subject to any moral Law. And if our Will must join in every moral Action, and it becomes lawful or unlawful according to the Rectitude or Depravity of our Will, where there is no Concurrence of the Will, or where it is against our Will, there no Sin can be, or at least no Sin will be imputed to us. To apply this general Rule to our particular Case.



All of us may observe and experience in ourselves many Thoughts and Desires and Inclinations naturally excited in our Breasts suddenly and unavoidably, without our Consent and against our Will, which should we entertain with any Approbation, Pleasure and Delight, would be highly criminal, and lead us into much Danger and Sin; but when rejected and stifled as soon as we can will involve us in no Guilt, nor be laid to our Charge as sinful, because they were not wilful, but purely natural, where we had no Choice to prevent or hinder them, nor was it in our Power to avoid them. For the first Motions of our Mind are generally so quick and sudden, that we can hardly observe them, much less govern them; nor is there Time for the Will to interpose in them, and therefore they are to be accounted only natural, not wilful, and therefore not sinful Actions. But I desire here to be understood of Thoughts only natural, and not of such as arise from acquired vicious Habits or evil Customs.

Before I leave this Head I shall take Notice of the Beginning and Progress of our sinful Thoughts, from the first Concurrence of the Will in them, till they are actually put in Practice. When a Thought  
springs

springs up in our Minds, which we perceive to be sinful, the very Scruple or Doubting whether we should stifle it or not, if we can, is the Beginning of Sin in us, because it plainly discovers, that we have not that Love for Virtue, which we ought to have. If we please and delight ourselves with the sinful Thought, improve and heighten it in our Fancies, we aggravate our Sin by an Anticipation and Prelibation of the sinful Action in our Minds. When we not only please ourselves with the wicked Thought, but wish we might without Punishment or Inconvenience to ourselves execute and put it in Practice, we are advanced further in Sin, and no Love nor regard to Virtue, but only the Fear of God or Man keeps us from the wicked Act. But we sin on further still, when no Obstacle can restrain us from complying with the evil Thought, but our Hearts are fully bent upon it, and we are resolved to put it in Execution. And we enflame the Reckoning higher still when we sit down and deliberate, consult and contrive Ways and Means, how we may compass our wicked Purposes. And last of all we fill up the full Measure of the Sin and give the finishing Stroke to the wicked Deed, when we

*Of the Origin and Sinfulness of our Thoughts.*

employ all the Powers and Faculties we have in the actual Commission of it. This generally is the gradual Progress young Sinners make in Sin, from the first attending to and complying with their wicked Thoughts, till they have actually put them in Execution. I proceed,

III. To lay down some Rules and Directions for the good Government of our Thoughts. I have endeavoured to prove already, in discoursing upon the Sinfulness of our Thoughts, that as far as they are natural, and out of our Power to govern, and come into our Minds against our Will and Consent, they are not sinful, or at least they will not be imputed to us by God Almighty as such: But that we may prevent, as much as it is possible, wicked Thoughts from rising in our Minds, or however that we may not involve ourselves in the Guilt and Sinfulness of them, I beg leave to prescribe three Things, which will be of great Use to us in the due Government of our Thoughts, and which will be all I shall at present say upon this Subject.

1st, That we may as much as it is possible live free and undisturbed from  
wicked

wicked Thoughts, and be no way accountable for them, it is very requisite that we ourselves should give no Occasion to them, nor be directly or indirectly accessory to them. For though we may not be the immediate Cause of what passes in our Minds, nor freely consent to what is often transacted there; yet we may by our ill Conduct and irregular Way of Living, have been the first Authors and chief Promoters of many of our indecent Thoughts and impure Desires, which often trouble and discompose our Minds. As therefore we find by Experience, that some sort of Company and Conversation, and greater or less Freedoms in our Discourse and Actions, Behaviour and Gestures are apt to excite irregular and forbidden Sentiments in our Minds and Fancies, it is prudent and incumbent upon us as our Duty to be careful what Acquaintances we contract, what Intimacies we give into, what Liberties we take, and with whom we love to converse, and whose Company we desire most. For we naturally carry away a Tincture and Smatch of the Temper and Disposition of our Companions, which for a long Time afterwards sticks close by us, and frequently returns in  
our



*Of the Origin and Sinfulness of our Thoughts.*

our Memory and Fancies. And as what we most study, meditate upon, and amuse ourselves with will chiefly be the Subject of our Thoughts, and will many Times force itself into our Minds even against our Will; so we should be careful to employ ourselves about good and virtuous Things, always at least innocent and inoffensive, and such as become us and the Station and Circumstances God in his wise Providence hath been pleased to place us in, while we live in this World.

Further, as we experience some Things to be in their Nature and Quality great Provocatives and Incentives to particular Desires and Inclinations, and consequently naturally excite in us like Thoughts; so when we know these Thoughts to be sinful and unlawful, if we would avoid the Guilt of them, it concerns us to avoid and abstain from those noxious and pernicious Things, of what Kind or Nature soever. I shall not instance in Particulars, but shall proceed,

2d, To lay down this general Rule for the good Government of our Thoughts, to be very careful and watchful about what passes in our Minds, and not to think it a light and an indifferent and useless Matter, and of no Consequence  
how

how we expose ourselves to Dangers and Temptations, which no one living can tell what Power they may have over us, till he hath experienced it; and his Experience may cost him so dear, that he may have Reason to repent of it all his Life afterwards.

3d, And lastly; When irregular, indecent, or impure Thoughts do at any Time start up in our Minds, as there is no Person breathing, who is not troubled more or less with them, let us be sure to suppress and stifle them as soon and as much as it is possible; let us not give way to them, never let us indulge, caress, and hug them, for we know not what a Viper we warm and cherish in our Breasts. And after all our Endeavours let us put up our Prayers to Almighty God for the Aid and Assistance of his holy Spirit to enable us to overcome all the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. And therefore accordingly I shall conclude this Discourse with a Collect of our Church. “ O Lord, from whom all  
“ good Things do come, grant to us thy  
“ humble Servants, that by thy holy In-  
“ spiration we may think those Things  
“ that be good, and by thy merciful Guid-  
“ ance may perform the same through  
“ our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*”

SERMON

22  
XVI

Of the Origin and Progress of the  
how we expose ourselves to Danger and  
Temptations, which no one living can  
escape. Power may have been  
all be had, excepted, and the  
person may call him to heart, that he  
may have Reason to repent of it, if he  
lives afterwards.  
And lastly, When I consider  
that of infinite Thoughts, to any  
I am bent up in our Minds, as this is  
not often breaking, who is not troubled  
more or less with them, let us be true to  
themselves and fill them as soon as we  
much as it is possible, let us not give  
way to them, never let us indulge, resist  
and put them, for we know not what  
a Year we want and cherish in our  
Hearts. And when the Lord's Providence let  
report upon our Power, Almighty God for  
the Aid and Assistance of his holy Spirit  
to enable us to overcome all the Tempta-  
tions of the World, the Flesh, and the  
Devil. And therefore, I shall  
renew this Power, O Lord, from whom all  
good Things do come, grant to us thy  
gracious assistance, that by thy holy In-  
spiration we may think those Things  
that be good and by thy inward Guide  
I shall may persevere in the same through-  
out my whole Life.

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# S E R M O N XVII.

## Of our Meditations.

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### PSALM XIX. 14.

*Let the Meditation of my Heart be acceptable  
in thy Sight.*

**I**N this Psalm King David sets forth the Praise and Glory of God from the stupendous Works of the Creation and the Perfection of his Law. In the first six Verses he magnifies God in the glorious Formation and Constitution of the heavenly Bodies, beginning thus, Verse 1. *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament sheweth his handy Work*; and concludeth in the Praise and Admiration of the Sun, *Which is as a Bridegroom coming out of his Chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong Man to run a Race*, Verse 5. Then he proceeds to commend  
and

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## Of our Meditations.

and extol the Purity and Perfection of God's Law, and the Truth and Righteousness of the divine Judgments, *which are more to be desired than Gold, yea than much fine Gold; sweeter also than Honey, and the Honey-comb.* Moreover are the Commandments of God desirable, not only because in observing them there is great Reward, but because they keep us back from presumptuous Sins, and cleanse us from our secret Faults; requiring not only that our outward Words and Actions, but our inward Thoughts and Intentions, the Meditation of our Heart be acceptable in God's Sight: This the Royal Psalmist means by the Meditation of the Heart, namely, the Thoughts and Reflections of the Mind, which in Scripture are generally supposed to be seated in the Heart; these he prays, that they may be acceptable and pleasing to God. And to this End I shall make the Thoughts of our Mind the Subject of my following Discourse. And,

I. I shall consider the Nature of our Thoughts in general.

II. I shall lay down some Rules and Directions for the good Government of them.

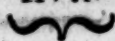
In considering the Nature of our Thoughts in general, I shall observe this Method.

1st,

1st, I will speak of the first Apprehensions and Notices of the Mind.

2d, Treat of our Thoughts and Meditations and Resolutions.

1st, In discoursing of the first Apprehensions and Notices of the Mind, we may observe, that the first Perceptions and Apprehensions of our Minds arise from Sensation, that is, the Impression external Objects make on our Senses, which is natural and unavoidable, and which we must perceive and feel, while we have our Senses about us, and while they constitute one Part of our Nature. For Man is a compound Being, not only endowed with a rational Spirit, but likewise with a sensitive Soul. In his Reason and Understanding and Freedom of Will he is related to the immortal Spirits above, and in his Appetites and Senses, he is allied to the Beasts which perish, here below. And by his sensitive Faculty he naturally apprehends external sensible Objects, and forms Perceptions of their different Natures and Qualities, and receives from them either Pleasure or Pain. And these Perceptions are in themselves innocent and harmless, as they are natural and necessary, and do proceed from Causes out of our Power to govern; but while we are conversant with the  
various

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various Objects we meet with daily in the World, we shall naturally be affected and moved by them; and it will be to no Purpose to endeavour to prevent the first Motions and Inclinations we find rising in our Breasts from the Presentment of these Objects to us. For we may as soon divest ourselves of our Nature, as be insensible of their Operations and Effects upon us. And therefore as to these first Apprehensions of our Minds, they are not to be accounted in themselves evil or sinful; because natural and necessary, and therefore involuntary; and as far as they are against our Will, or without its Consent, they will not be imputed to us as Sins; though these first Notices and Perceptions in their Tendency and Consequence may lead to Sin. For we must observe further, as the Impressions of external Objects on our Senses are the Spring of all the Ideas we have by Sensation; so from the Reflection of the Mind, upon these Ideas there arise other Ideas, which with the former are the Source of all the Thoughts and Imaginations, we can naturally form to ourselves. Which brings me,

2dly, To treat of our Thoughts and Meditations and Resolutions.

And

And first I observe, that as the simple Perception of any Object is in itself innocent, so the pure Thinking and Judging and Reasoning about it is lawful. For the bare thinking on Sin is not sinful without the Approbation of it. Let the Object of our Thoughts be what it will, ever so impure, ever so evil, if we do not please ourselves with it, if we delight not in it, if we dislike and disapprove of it, hate and detest it, the contemplating the Turpitude, Deformity, and Odiousness of it, is not unlawful, but it may serve to good Uses and Purposes.

Thus the blessed Spirits above may meditate upon the Pride and Ambition, Baseness and Ingratitude of *Lucifer* and the fallen Angels, but with the greatest Abhorrence and Detestation, and magnify God the more for their own Glory and Happiness.

Thus our blessed Saviour could not but know and consider the Temptations of the Devil, which made him with Anger and Resentment say, *Get thee hence Satan.*

Thus God himself, who is said to be of purer Eyes than to behold Evil, and with whom no Iniquity dwelleth, observes the Wickedness of Mens Ways, but with Anger and Indignation, and with

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Thoughts



Thoughts of taking Vengeance on them for their Sins and Provocations. And thus we may wisely and profitably call our Sins and Iniquities to Remembrance, and consider the Heinousness and Impiety of them, in order to our more serious Repentance for them, and sincere Amendment of our Lives for the Future.

From all which it is very plain our Thoughts and Meditations about Evil may be sometimes very far from being unlawful, but very profitable and commanded and our Duty.

But when we think and meditate upon what is Evil with Approbation and Complacency, Satisfaction and Pleasure; when we delight ourselves with the Intention and Resolution of putting our wicked Thoughts in Practice, then the Thoughts and Meditations of our Hearts become sinful, and we shall be accountable for yielding to them, and indulging and cherishing them, when we should have endeavoured to suppress and stifle them.

Nay, we are punishable for our wicked Thoughts, when they do not arise voluntarily in our Minds, but proceed from the present Circumstances, and Condition and Temper we are in, when it was in our Power to have avoided those Circumstances; or through our  
Care-

Carelesness and Negligence we do not regard what passes in our Minds.

We have observed before, that external Objects naturally affect our Senses, and excite in us strong Desires and Inclinations and Passions, which may be inordinate and sinful should we gratify them; but which are our Infirmities, and will not be imputed to us as Sins, when they come into our Minds without our Consent, and against our Will, and we ourselves were not the occasional Cause of them.

But when we voluntarily expose ourselves to Temptation, and knowingly run into Danger; when we look out for Objects to ensnare our wandering Hearts, to please our wanton Fancies, and captivate our giddy Minds, no longer may we then plead the Weakness and Infirmary of our Nature in excuse for our impure Desires and unlawful Passions, when we ourselves were the Occasion of them, and are answerable for them.

Now we may be several Ways necessary to our sinful Thoughts, either by being conversant with Objects, which we experience do naturally excite them in us, or by indulging ourselves in too great a Liberty and Freedom in Company and Discourse, or by being immoderate

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derate in our Recreations and Diversions, or by Excess in our Diet and Entertainments, especially by over-heating and enflaming ourselves with Drinking, when we may be so little Masters of ourselves and our Reason, as to know not what we either say or do. Thus *Lot*, when he was overtaken with Drunkenness was guilty of the Sin of Incest with his two Daughters, though he perceived not afterwards what he had done. So much does it concern us how we suffer ourselves by Intemperance and Excess in any Case to lose the Use of our Reason, or to let our Passions get the Mastery over it.

In general, whenever we voluntarily place ourselves in such Circumstances, or put ourselves in such a Temper, either of Body or Mind, as we can foresee will naturally dispose us to conceive irregular and indecent Thoughts, in such Case we ourselves are actually guilty of all the Sefulness of our Thoughts; because it was in our Power, before they came into our Minds, to have prevented and hindred them, though when they have possessed and seized upon the Mind, we may not be able to resist them. And therefore it is of great Importance to us to be watchful over the Motions of our Minds;

Minds; for we know not how great a Fire a little Spark may kindle in us; but to be sure let us be careful how we add Fuel to the Fire we find glowing in our Breasts. And the more Reason we have to be mindful what Thoughts we harbour within us, because we are always thinking on something or other; and when we are not employed about good and virtuous, or at least innocent and harmless Thoughts, corrupt and vicious Sentiments will naturally spring up in our Minds: And these consented to and delighted in, will as naturally raise in us strong Desires and vehement Passions; and these indulged and gratified, often expose us to the utmost Dangers and Distresses, and often bring on us certain Ruin and Death.

The Soul is an active Principle within us, and must be employed, and if we do not employ it, it will find out Work for itself; at least the Devil, who is always ready upon Occasion, will find out Employment for it. We are exposed to many spiritual Enemies, which watch all Opportunities of insinuating themselves into our Affections, and stealing away our Hearts. The World, the Flesh, and the Devil all conspire against us, and begin their first Attacks upon our



Thoughts, even in our Devotions, and best Actions, nay in our very Sleep they too often sow their wicked Tares, which if we are not careful to root out, they will grow up into Sins of the first Magnitude, and choak our good Works. And therefore when we are continually in such Danger from evil Thoughts, it is no indifferent Matter to be careless and negligent about them, but very unsafe knowingly and wilfully by any Means to provoke and incite them. No one knows how far his wicked Thoughts and Imaginations may carry him, and what a Load of Sin and Guilt he may bring upon himself by giving way and consenting to them. By indulging and caressing and improving vile and wicked Desires a Person may be guilty of the greatest Debauchery, and by re-acting and repeating impure Scenes in his Imagination and Fancy, he may incur the Guilt of more Sin, than he is able to perpetrate. A Man in his Wishes and Desires may secretly stab his Enemy in a thousand Parts, and take Revenge of him and all his Family by contriving in his Thoughts and Designs their utter Ruin and Destruction; and though he may never be able to execute his revengeful Intentions and Resolutions, he will

will stand guilty in the Sight of God of all the Sin he fully purposed to commit in his wicked Heart. For God trieth the very Heart and Reins: and though the actual Execution of a wicked Act will aggravate the Sin; yet the Intention alone is sufficient to condemn us before God. When *Abraham* fully intended to offer up his Son *Isaac*, it was imputed to him by God for Righteousness; and shall we actually resolve upon the Commission of the greatest Crimes, and foolishly imagine to escape the divine Vengeance? No. As upon our good Purposes and sincere Resolutions of Repentance and Amendment of Life, though we may never live to perform them, we hope for Mercy and Forgiveness from God; so for our wicked Thoughts and Intentions, though we never in Fact execute them, we may justly fear our Condemnation at the Trial of the last great Day. For the Want of Opportunity and Ability to commit the Sin will but little extenuate it.

Having thus discoursed of the Nature of our Thoughts in general, and shewn the Danger and Sinfulness of them, I shall now proceed,

II. To lay down some Rules and Directions for the good Government of them.

1st, As Sensation and the Apprehension and Perception of external Objects by the Means of our Senses is the Spring and Source of all our Thoughts and Reflections, from whence they first originally arise; so a right Use and Direction of our Senses to their true and proper Objects, which ought to be always innocent and lawful, will contribute very much to the good Government of our Thoughts and Affections. For we are of a compound Nature, and consist of Body as well as Soul; and while the Soul makes use of the Organs of the Body in its ordinary Operations, and while external Objects naturally affect these corporal Organs, which constitute our Senses, we are necessarily moved by these Objects, and cannot help perceiving their several Qualities and Properties; and according to these Qualities we must feel Thoughts and Desires and Passions agreeable or disagreeable rising in our Breasts. And all this is no more than what is natural to us, and is the very Law and Constitution of our Being, to be sensible of the Objects presented to  
us,

us, and to receive from them pleasing or displeasing Sensations; so that generally speaking we cannot help being moved and affected by external Objects, when they are presented to our Imagination. And therefore when we find we are in any Danger of being induced and tempted by them to commit any Sin, the safest Way is to withdraw from them, and to free ourselves from the Thoughts of them as soon as possible. Some Temptations there are, which we may be able to resist and conquer, but others there are, which a prudent Man will much rather chuse to avoid than encounter. And the best Way to avoid them generally is, to keep a Guard over our Senses. And to secure them the better, be careful with what Objects you entertain them. Suffer them not, if you can help it, to come in the Way of an Object which naturally excites in us an unlawful Thought: And that we may keep the Object out of our Minds, let us keep it out of our Sight; for we know not what Danger may enter in at our Eyes.

The Senses are the Avenues to our Souls, if therefore we would keep Possession of the Castle, let us guard well the Out-works, and keep off the Enemy.  
at



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at a Distance. Afford him no Assistance of our own, and he shall not approach to hurt us.

But if we suffer our Senses to indulge and gratify themselves with any Object that pleases them, without regarding the Tendency and Consequence of their Motions, it will be impossible for us to prevent disorderly and wicked Thoughts from springing up in our Minds; and our evil Thoughts naturally lead to provoke in us unlawful Desires, and these Desires end in ungovernable Passions, which frequently hurry us on to Action, and often end in utter Ruin and Destruction.

Had not *Eve* beheld the Fairness of the forbidden Fruit, nor with Pleasure hearkned to the Voice of the Tempter, she had never tasted it, nor known Evil; and could *Adam* have kept the Mastery over himself, and followed rather the Dictates of his Reason, than the Persuasion of his Consort, he had refused the pernicious Gift, and had not brought Death on himself and all his Posterity. But from hence we ought to learn the dangerous Consequence of pleasing our Senses in what is forbidden.

But if we would prevent the Mischief and Misery we frequently bring on ourselves

selves by a careless Indulgence of our Thoughts and Desires of unlawful Objects, let us shun and avoid, as much as it is possible, the Company and Presence of those Objects; for it is natural to us, when we gaze at and converse with them, to be moved and affected by them. Nor is there any Crime in being sensible of Beauty and Perfection, when we see them. For God Almighty had not formed all those regular and agreeable Productions visible in the Creation, were it criminal in us to be pleased and delighted with them.

But then commences the Sinfulness of gratifying our Senses, when the Object they delight in is unlawful; or the Thoughts and Desires we naturally have of it, are irregular and forbidden. And the best and wisest Way to prevent this Guilt, is to avoid the bewitching Object, lest we be entangled by it. Therefore if thou hast any immoderate Desire of Wine, in the Words of Solomon, *look not thou upon it, when it is Red, when it giveth his Colour in the Glass, when it moveth itself aright; at the last it biteth like a Serpent and stingeth like an Adder.* Art thou easily captivated with the Charms of the Fair Sex, *keep thine Heart with all Diligence, as the same wise Man adviseth, lest it be enticed*  
by

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*by a strange Woman, and thou goest after her straightway, as an Ox goeth to the Slaughter, or as a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks: Till a Dart strike through thy Liver, as a Bird hasseth to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life. Make a Covenant with thine Eyes, after the Example of Job; let thine Eyelids look straight before thee, and ponder the Paths of thy Feet, lest thou fall by the precious Things thou beholdest. Why shouldest thou gaze and dote upon thy Ruin? Consider the Tendency of thy Thoughts, whither thy Desires lead thee, and what will be the End and Consequence of gratifying an inordinate Passion. But to prevent Surprise by a wandering Thought which may suddenly and involuntarily dart into thy Mind, at least to hinder the Growth and Strength of thine Inclinations against the Dictates and Rules of thy Reason, use Moderation and Abstinence in thy Feasts and Entertainments, and be temperate in thine ordinary Repasts; make not Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts thereof; lay in no Store of Fuel, which may unexpectedly catch Fire, and break out into an irresistible Flame. The natural Warmth of our Constitutions without Supply will abate, will be at least governable, and may be allayed in a law-*

lawful Way. Wherefore if *your Affections be set on Things above, not on Things below, if ye be dead with Christ from the Rudiments of the World, mortify your Members which are upon Earth, and observe the Words of the Apostle, Touch not, taste not, handle not ; which all are to perish with the using.*

2d, The other Origin and Spring of our Thoughts and Ideas is the Reflection of the Mind upon the Images and Representations of Things raised in us by the Means of our Senses. When external Objects are presented to us, they naturally touch and move our Senses, and we form to ourselves Thoughts and Imaginations according to the Nature of those Objects ; and the Notice the Mind takes of what thus passes within us gives Birth to new Ideas, which by Reflection, and comparing them together, by adding to or subtracting from them, we improve into various Thoughts and Meditations, and begin to reason and judge of Things. Now though the first Motions of our Breasts, upon the Apprehension of an Object may be natural and unavoidable, the Reflections and Meditations of our Minds about it afterwards are generally free and voluntary ; and it is of the last Importance to our Happiness, that we  
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make Choice of a good and lawful Subject, and in itself worthy our Thoughts and Meditations ; and further, that we reason and judge aright about it,

1st, It highly concerns us in our Meditations, that our Thoughts are employed, not only about innocent and lawful Subjects, but such likewise as are in themselves commendable and excellent, and worthy the Time we spend about them, and becoming the Station and Character we bear in the World. Should we, like the Emperor *Domitian*, when we are in private, spend our Time in the catching and killing of Flies, though the Exercise might be innocent, it must be very unworthy of us, who are capable of much nobler and sublimer Studies, and are made to contemplate the Beauties and Glories of God's Works ; to extol his holy Name, and to imitate the divine Bounty by doing all the Good and Service we can, while we live in the World. An innocent and inoffensive Life, though it be much preferable to a wicked Course of Living, which the Generality of Mankind follow, is not all that is required of us ; but we are sent into the World upon a much higher Account and greater Design, and were not endowed with those excellent Talents  
of

of Mind and Body, to keep them like the slothful Servant, laid up in a Napkin: but we must lay them out and improve them, to the Glory of God, the Good of Mankind, and Salvation of our own Souls. The Meditations of our Hearts ought always to be not only pure and undefiled, that we may be kept back from presumptuous Sins, that we may be upright and innocent from the great Transgression; but that the Words of our Mouth, and the Thoughts of our Hearts may be most acceptable in God's Sight, they should be employed about the best and worthiest Subjects. And therefore,

2dly, It highly concerns us to make a true Judgment and Estimate of Things, and to meditate upon them, and value them according to their real Worth. For according to the Estimate and Value we put upon any Thing in our Thoughts and Reflections, our Desires and Pursuits after it will be the stronger and more eager.

And therefore if we make a wrong Judgment and Estimate about the Object of our Desires, not only all the Care and Trouble we are at to obtain the desired Object is lost and mis-spent, but we meet with Vexation and Disappointment in the End, when we expected

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to receive Satisfaction and Pleasure as the Reward of all our Trouble. Hence it is we are generally so dissatisfied and disappointed, even when we succeed in the Pursuit after the Riches and Honours and Pleasures of this World. We frame in our Minds great Thoughts of these Things, and study and meditate much upon them, and labour all we can to obtain them, placing our whole Happiness in the Enjoyment of them, and judging ourselves miserable without them: Whereas these serve only occasionally to our greater Happiness or Misery, according as we make a good or ill Use of them. If we make a good Use of these exterior Blessings, they raise and improve our Happiness; if we abuse these Gifts, they only add to our Misery: But we shall always find ourselves mistaken and disappointed, if we imagine they alone can make us happy. For our true Happiness consists in much nobler Acquisitions and Excellencies, chiefly in the Virtues and Perfections of our Minds, and in an Imitation of the divine Glories and Excellencies; in a Resemblance of the Goodness and Kindness of God towards his Creatures, and particularly of his Love to Mankind; without which Endowments and Dispositions

sions we shall find all the Good this World can afford, to be nothing but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit; which made the great and wise King pronounce after all his Enjoyment of this World, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.* A true Notion and a frequent Meditation of the Emptiness and Vanity of all the Pleasures and Satisfactions of this Life, without Virtue and Goodness, will teach us where to place our true Happiness, viz. in the Love and Favour and Blessing of Almighty God, and in Charity and Beneficence to one another: And having thus fixed our main End, our Thoughts and Desires, Meditation and Study will naturally tend to it; then it will be a Pleasure and Delight to us to follow St Paul's Advice, *Set your Affections on Things above:* Then we shall easily and willingly comply with the Exhortation of the same Apostle, with which I shall conclude this Discourse, *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report; if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think on these Things.* Col. iii. 2. Phil. iv. 8.

And the Peace of God, which passeth all Understanding, shall keep your Hearts and Minds thro' Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



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## S E R M O N XVIII.

Of the living Sacrifice of our  
Bodies.

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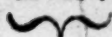
ROMANS XII. 1.

*I beseech you therefore Brethren by the Mercies  
of God, that ye present your Bodies a liv-  
ing Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God,  
which is your reasonable Service.*

**T**H E S E Words plainly refer to  
the Argument and Discourse in  
the preceeding Part of this E-  
pistle, the principal End and Intent of  
which is to prove the Excellency and  
Perfection of the Gospel above the Law  
in general; but more particularly they  
allude to the Ritual and Levitical Part of  
the Law instituted by *Moses* concerning  
Sacrifices. In the former Part of the

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Verse St Paul beseeches and entreats the Roman Converts by the Mercies of God; by which more especially he understands that most gracious and merciful Dispensation of the divine Providence in our Redemption by Jesus Christ; and in the latter Part of the Text he exhorts them to *present their Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable Service*; in Opposition to the dead Sacrifices, they had hitherto offered, which in themselves alone had no real Holiness nor true Reasonableness and Excellence, and consequently were unacceptable unto God. But before I enter upon my Discourse in general on these Words I beg leave to explain and illustrate them more particularly.

*I beseech you therefore Brethren by the Mercies of God*; the great Apostle of the Gentiles addresses his Converts in a very affectionate and engaging Manner, requesting and beseeching them by the endearing Compellation of Brethren, as admitted into the Communion of Christ's Church, as Members of his Body, as Heirs of God, and joint Heirs with Christ: And he presses and enforces his Request by putting them in Mind and admonishing them of the Mercies and Compassion of God; who, when they were dead in  
Tref-

Trespases and Sin, and lay exposed to the extreme Displeasure and Wrath of God, had quickened them to a lively Hope by the Death of his Son Christ Jesus our Lord.

*That ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice*; the Mercies of God are a very powerful Motive and Argument to oblige and constrain us to devote ourselves to God's Service and Worship by abstaining from all Vice and Impurity, by mortifying and subduing all our evil and corrupt Affections, *perfecting Holiness in the Fear of God.* Thus studying to promote the Honour and Glory of God in our Lives and Conversations, by a Sanctification of ourselves wholly, both in Soul and Body we become living and spiritual Sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God; without which pious Intention and Desire to please God by obeying his Will, no Sacrifice could be acceptable to him under the Law; nor will he accept any Service we can render him under the Gospel, which proceeds not from a virtuous Disposition and a Love of God and all Goodness, Truth, and Righteousness.

But when we become living Sacrifices unto God by offering up ourselves in his Service, by propagating his true



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Religion in the World, and maintaining the Cause of Truth and Righteousness on Earth, both in Word and Deed; this is our reasonable Service, truly holy, and most acceptable unto God. A reasonable Service is the most proper and best becoming Duty of a rational Creature, and our great Creator, the Author of every good and perfect Gift, and the most reasonable Being we can conceive, must most highly approve, esteem, and prefer before any ritual Institution, the Performance of moral Duties, which is our most reasonable Service, as it is suitable and agreeable, pleasant and delightful to his supreme Excellence, which is his most righteous and holy Nature. *I beseech you therefore Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye present your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable Service.*

In discoursing more fully upon which Words, I shall endeavour to shew the Excellence and Preference of the Christian Sacrifice, which is defined in the Text to be our reasonable Service, before the Jewish Sacrifices prescribed in the Mosaical Law, namely, the Blood of Bulls and of Goats. And that we may the better understand this Matter, and per-

perceive the superior Excellence of one Sacrifice above the other, I shall consider each of them distinctly. And,

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I. I shall briefly treat of the Jewish Sacrifices.

II. I shall more particularly speak to the living Sacrifice mentioned in the Text, which is our reasonable Service.

I. I shall briefly treat of the Jewish Sacrifices. As to the first Original of the general Custom of Sacrificing to God, which so antiently and for so many Years prevailed both among the Heathens, as well as *Jews*, the best and most probable Account of the Matter I think to be, that it was derived from divine Institution; otherwise it is not easily to be imagined, how so strange a Practice could have ever entred into the Heart of Man. And the principal Intention and Design of God in prescribing and instituting Sacrifices seems to be, that they might be Types and Shadows to pre-figure and represent the future great Sacrifice of our Saviour upon the Cross for the Sins of the whole World. This seems to be the chief End of all atoning and expiatory Sacrifices. There were other Sacrifices indeed, which were called

Eucharistical, which were probably instituted to be external Signs and visible Testimonies of our Homage and Gratitude to God, for all his Benefits and Blessings bestowed upon us. And these two, the Expiatory and Eucharistical Sacrifices were the Chief and Principal; but both these abstractedly considered in themselves and of their own Nature were no way pleasing and acceptable to God, without there was a particular and especial Regard paid to the great End and Design of their Institution.

There was no intrinsical and real Virtue and Goodness in Sacrifices; and had not Sin entred into the World, there had been no Occasion for any Expiation of it by a Sacrifice; but upon the Transgression of our first Parents through the Malice and Subtlety of the Devil, God was pleased to take Pity and Compassion upon them in their wretched State, and in Mercy to provide a Remedy and Cure of the mortal Wound they had received by their Fall, which he intimates and promises to them in the Curse he pronounces upon the Serpent; where we meet with the first Promise of the Redemption of Mankind by the Blood of Christ, our great Sacrifice, *predestinated to be slain for us before the*  
*Foun-*

*Foundation of the World.* And to keep up a perpetual Memorial of the Death of Christ, *Who in the Fulness of Time was to be made of a Woman, made under the Law,* Gal. iv. 4, *to redeem them that were under the Law, 5. that we might receive the Adoption of Sons.*

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God was pleased to command his peculiar People, the *Jews*, to offer Sacrifices of slain Beasts unto him, as Emblems of the Sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God; predetermined to be *slain for us before the Foundation of the World.*

But though the primary Intention of God in instituting Sacrifices seems to respect the great Sacrifice of Christ; yet generally there does not appear any explicit Belief of this in the Person, who offered the Sacrifice. But however it was a received Opinion and a common Apprehension of Mankind, that Sacrifices were available and effectual to the Expiation of Sin; but then it was the Judgment and Persuasion of the wiser and better Sort of Men, that this Virtue and Efficacy was not in the Sacrifices themselves alone, but as they were accompanied with a pious Mind, and a holy Disposition, with Sorrow and Contrition and true Repentance for Sins past, and a sincere Resolution of Amendment of Life for the future. When they were not thus attended, they were weak  
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and beggarly Elements, unprofitable to put away Sin, and offensive in the Sight of God.

Psal. li. 16,  
17.

However the Notion of the Virtue and Efficacy of expiatory Sacrifices to wash away Sin came into the World, it is certain it was not by the Blood of the Sacrifices themselves that God was appeased and his Anger averted, but upon the Account of the Humiliation and Repentance of the Sinner himself. This appears from *David's* Practice and Acknowledgment in his Prayer for Remission of Sins. *Thou desirest not Sacrifice*, saith he, *else would I give it thee; thou delightest not in Burnt-offerings. The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit; a broken and a contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

As to Eucharistical Sacrifices, which were instituted as Signs and Tokens of our Homage and Gratitude to God, the great Lord and Sovereign of the Universe, and sole Proprietor of all the Creatures and Things in it, it is manifest, they could not of themselves be of any Account and Esteem with God, as the first and original Appointment of them was only to be a Testimony of our Thankfulness and Gratitude to God, to signify our Acknowledgment of the Duty and Service we owe to him, for  
our

our continual and daily Support and Subsistence by his Goodness and Bounty, and to put us in Mind of our constant Dependence upon him. Should these Sacrifices be offered up to God without such Acknowledgments in Prayers and Praises, either mental or vocal, in Sincerity, and from the Heart, they would plainly be a direct Violation and Abuse of their original Institution, highly displeasing and offensive to God, an Abomination to him, and bring down from Heaven a Curse, rather than a Blessing, upon him that offered them. This may be inferred from what we read in the Psalms; *I will not reprove thee for thy Sacrifices, or thy Burnt-offerings to have been continually before me. Will I eat the Flesh of Bulls, or drink the Blood of Goats? Offer unto God Thanksgiving, and pay thy Vows unto the most High. Whoso offereth Praise, glorifieth me.* Psalm 1.  
8, 13, 14.  
Offer<sup>23</sup>.

From what hath been said we may perceive how to reconcile the different Accounts, which we meet with in Scripture concerning Sacrifices, and the contrary Sentiments God at several Times expresses of them. *To what Purpose is the Multitude of your Sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord, I am full of the Burnt-offerings of Rams, and the Fat of fed Beasts, and* Isaiah 1.  
11, 13.

Serm. XVIII. *I delight not in the Blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He-Goats: Bring no more vain Oblations, &c. I desired Mercy and not Sacrifice. For I spake not unto the Fathers, nor commanded them in the Day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices. But this Thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my Voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my People.* Now it is plain from other Places of Scripture that God did institute and command Sacrifices, and the Patriarchs and holy Men of old did offer up Sacrifices to God, and God was well-pleased with Sacrifices, and showed his Acceptance of them by Fire from Heaven. And in the Book of *Leviticus* God does distinguish the several Kinds of Sacrifices, and prescribes the several Circumstances and Conditions of them. And this being truly the Case, we must consider how all this is to be reconciled, and God's seemingly contradictory Declarations and Proceedings justified.

Hof. vi. 6.

Jer. vii. 22.

23.

It hath been already observed, that there is no inherent and true Virtue or Holiness in Sacrifices of themselves and in their own Nature. Sacrifices in themselves are Things indifferent to God, and the Practice of sacrificing becomes obligatory,

tory, only as it is prescribed and commanded; and it is commanded, thereby to signify something more excellent and better than the Sacrifices themselves. I have taken Notice, that the principal Intention of God in the Institution of expiatory Sacrifices was to exhibit Types and Figures of the great Sacrifice of Christ, upon whose Account alone they were acceptable Atonements to God; though they might be thought by Men to have an atoning Virtue in themselves. But then they were to be attended with Repentance and Reformation of Life, which procured their Acceptance with God, and an Expiation of the Sins of Men; but without which they were neither commanded nor accepted by God, nor could they give any true Peace and Quiet to the guilty Consciences of Men. *To this Man will I look, saith the Lord, by the Prophet Isaiah, even to him, that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word.* Without which Contrition of Spirit, *He that killeth an Ox, is as if he slew a Man: He that sacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dog's Neck.*

Serin.  
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Isa. lxvi.  
2, 3.

And in like Manner we may conclude about Eucharistical Sacrifices, that they were not commanded to be offered by themselves alone, separate from the Disposition



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position and Temper of the Offerer; but they were to be joined with Piety and Devotion to God, and to be given as Signs and Testimonies of our Duty and Gratitude and Homage to him, and of our Subjection and Obedience to his holy Will. *Hath the Lord as great Delight in Burnt-offerings and Sacrifices, as in obeying the Voice of the Lord?* Behold, to obey is better than Sacrifice, and to hearken than the Fat of Rams, saith Samuel. God forbids Sacrifices, unless they were offered with a pious Mind and Intention. Thus we read in *Isaiab*, *Bring no more vain Offerings; Incense is an Abomination unto me, &c.* that is, unless attended with devout Prayers and Praises and Thanksgivings, and with Sanctity of Life.

1 Sam. xv.  
22.

Isa. i. 13.

II. I shall now more particularly speak to the living Sacrifice mentioned in my Text, *which is our reasonable Service.*

When we are commanded to *present our Bodies a living Sacrifice unto God*, the Words imply in their full Sense and Meaning our whole selves, both our Souls and Bodies, all the Powers and Faculties, all the Strength and Abilities of both; that we should devote and consecrate ourselves wholly to his Honour and Service, sanctifying our Thoughts,  
Words

*Of the living Sacrifice of our Bodies.*

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Words and Actions, by a general Intention and Disposition to please him in them all; *whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, doing all to the Glory of God.*

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1 Cor. x.

31.

But in a restrained and narrower Sense, the Words more particularly signify the good Government of our Bodies, and a Restraint of our carnal Appetites and Affections, within the Bounds of Reason and Moderation, bringing them into Subjection to our Spirits. And in this Sense they prescribe the Duties of Sobriety, Temperance and Chastity, and whatever tends to the preserving and promoting these Virtues; as Watching and Praying, and Fasting, Mortification and Self-Denial, and all other holy Severities, which may be of Use and Service to the due Regulation and prudent Government of our Passions; and this not only at set Times and Seasons, publicly for that Purpose appointed, though at those Times more especially, and particularly in the Season of *Lent*, but on all other Occasions; so that our Bodies may be properly living Sacrifices to God, and truly Temples of the Holy Ghost.

The *Jewish* Sacrifices were often costly and expensive, attended with much Trouble; and great Care and Circumspection

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specification were used, that they might be perfect and entire, free from all Blemish: If they wanted either an Eye or Ear, or were defective in any Part, they were laid aside, as unfit to be Offered. Now all this was intended for the Instruction of us Christians. That no Desire nor Inclination, no Affection nor Interest should be too dear to us to be made a Sacrifice of for God's Honour and Glory. Agreeably hereunto St Paul expresses himself in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, *Yea, and if I be offered upon the Sacrifice and Service of their Faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.* And so our blessed Saviour, *Who came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil them; if thy right Eye or right Hand offend thee, says he, pluck it out, or cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee, that one of thy Members should perish, and not that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell.*

Phil.ii.17.

Matt.v.  
29, 30.

These Duties may be hard to Flesh and Blood, but when we consider what mighty Obligations we lie under to Almighty God, not only for our Creation at first, but for our continual Preservation and Protection ever since we were born, from the many Dangers and Mischiefs, we daily and hourly are exposed to; *that in him we live, and move, and have*

*have our Being*, and to his Bounty and Munificence we owe all the Comforts and Conveniencies, all the Satisfaction and Pleasure of our whole Lives; and that not only all our present Happiness, but all our Hopes and Expectations of Bliss and Glory in a future State depend upon his Goodness and Mercy; and that he hath promised to make abundant Amendments hereafter for whatever we shall do or suffer now for the Glory of his great Name, and promoting his true Religion in the World; that whatever present Pleasure and Gratification we forego, whatever Self-denial we choose for his sake, will be recompenced with a far more exceeding and an eternal Weight of Glory; when we weigh and consider all this, nothing should be thought too dear a Sacrifice unto God, when he requires no more at any time than our reasonable Service.

- It is the peculiar Excellence and Glory of the Christian Religion, that it enjoins and commands nothing unreasonable; nothing absurd or ridiculous; nothing contrary to the best Sense and Judgment of Mankind. If its Precepts are perfect, and more sublime than the Laws of any other Religion in the World; we have the Promise of a more plentiful Supply of God's Grace to as-



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first and enable us to live up to the Perfection and Purity of them; and if at any Time we sin against God, *we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.* And if the Case should so happen, that we are traduced and persecuted, or suffer any Loss or Damage for the Sake of Christ and the Gospel, we have a greater Assurance, than was ever given to any other People, but Christians, of a more ample Recompence, and a much higher Reward, which God will be sure to give us, *even an Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us.* So that the great End and Design of the Christian Religion is the utmost Improvement, Advancement, and Perfection of our Nature; enjoining nothing without or contrary to Reason, and forbidding nothing, but what, when all Things are duly considered, will appear plainly destructive of it. *For the Grace of God, that bringeth Salvation, hath appeared to all Men, teaching us, that denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World; looking for that blessed Hope and the glorious Appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Who gave himself for us, that*

1 Pet. i. 4.

Tit. ii. 11,  
12, 13, 14.

*that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar People zealous of good Works.*

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Thus are we commanded to *adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things*, by a real and substantial Piety towards God, by an exact Performance of Justice and Mercy to Men, and by a due Regulation of our Affections and Passions and good Government of ourselves. These are Duties good and excellent in themselves, not obligatory only by some particular positive Command, as all instituted and ritual Duties are; but they are Works of universal Righteousness, neither confined to Time nor Place, nor prescribed to particular Persons or separate Communities, but oblige all Mankind.

These are such Duties, as all Men must approve of, and acknowledge their true Reasonableness and Excellency: And though the inordinate Desires and vehement Passions, some particular Vice or mistaken Interest prevail upon too many to act contrary to them, yet they cannot help condemning themselves afterwards for it; and this appears from the Judgment they pass upon other Persons. For though they allow themselves the Indulgence and Gratification

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of their own Vices and Wickedness; yet they inwardly commend and applaud the Virtues of Sobriety and Temperance in others, and have generally an Esteem and Veneration for their Persons.

Heb. ix.  
1, 10.

Phil. iv. 8.

Rom. xiv.  
17, 18.

Such is the Strength and Force, which the Sense of moral Virtues has upon the Minds of Men, that they cannot but like and esteem, extol and admire their native Beauty and Excellence. But these are the weighty Matters of the Christian Religion. The Mosaical Covenant *had Ordinances of divine Service, which stood only in Meats and Drinks, and divers Washings*; but we are taught by St Paul, *that the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the holy Ghost. For he that in these Things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of Men.* And the same Apostle in his Epistle to the Philippians concludes, *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, whatsoever Things are just, whatsoever Things are pure, whatsoever Things are lovely, whatsoever Things are of good Report; if there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think on these Things.*

We esteem and value ourselves upon the Dignity and Superiority of our Nature, above any of the Creatures in this sub-

sublunary World. But wherein does our Superiority and Excellence consist? Is it not plainly in our reasonable Nature; a natural Love and Approbation of all Truth and Righteousness, in our rational Powers and Faculties, whereby we apprehend and judge of Persons and Things, perceive their mutual Relations and Dependencies, and deduce a Reason for our acting and behaving ourselves towards them according to their respective Natures and Qualifications. For as to Strength and Activity and the other Accomplishments of our Bodies, many other Animals on Earth excel us in them.

Our Excellency therefore consisting in our rational and moral Nature, and especially in the Apprehension we have of a God and Religion, which no Creature here below besides ourselves takes the least Notice, or discovers any Notion of, must it not be both our Duty and our Glory to live up to the Dignity of our Nature, by acting according to the Dictates of our Conscience and Judgment, *presenting ourselves a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable Service?* What can be more becoming a rational Creature than to live according to his Reason? Let other Animals be led by their several Appetites



and Senses; let them look no higher than this Earth for their Food and Nourishment; but let us Men, and especially us Christians, entertain nobler Thoughts of ourselves and have larger Views of Happiness, than what we can enjoy on this Earth, by raising our Eyes and extending our Hopes and Expectations towards Heaven, aspiring after the Glories of God's Kingdom, and thirsting after those Rivers of Pleasure, which are at his right Hand for evermore.

Though our Nature be a Composition of Body as well as Spirit; yet let us remember the Dignity and Excellence of our Souls above our Bodies. In our Bodies we may be compared to the brute Beasts, that perish; but in our Souls we resemble the blessed Spirits above. And as the Happiness of any Being consists in the Perfection of the most excellent Part of its Nature, so the supreme Happiness of us Men is to be placed in the highest Improvement and Perfection of our Souls, that is, in acting most rationally, which is living up to the Principles and Precepts of Christianity; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises; that by these we might be partakers of the divine Nature. *Having escaped the Corruption*

tion, that is in the World through Lust. Our Origin and Extraction derives from Heaven; our first Parents were made in the Image and Likeness of God; and when by their Disobedience they defaced and deformed the divine Image, God in Mercy took Pity on them, and found out the Means of restoring them to their original Righteousness by Jesus Christ; who both by Example and Precept hath taught us the right Way to Heaven, and to recover anew the Image and Favour of God, in both which our true Happiness does consist. *St Paul* places the Image of God in Righteousness and true Holiness, which is the Sum and Comprehension of all the Precepts of Christianity. And therefore we are commanded to be holy, as God is holy; pure, as he is pure; just, as he is just; merciful, as he is merciful. And these Graces and Virtues are the Conditions of obtaining the divine Favour, and alone render us capable and qualified to receive it.

What greater Honour therefore can there be, what higher Dignity, Glory, and Excellence, what more compleat and perfect Happiness, what nobler Exaltation and Perfection of our Nature, than

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Psal. xxx.

15.

1 Pet. i. 4.

to be like and resemble God; to imitate his moral Attributes and Excellencies, which are the Beauty and Glory of the Deity; than to study to please him, in whose Favour is Life, by giving all Diligence to add to our Faith Virtue, and to Virtue, Knowledge; and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, brotherly Kindness; and to brotherly Kindness, Charity.

Heb. xiii.

22, 23, 24.

These are the several Gradations and Steps by which we shall mount and ascend up into Heaven; to an innumerable Company of Angels, to the general Assembly and Church of the First-born, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the Spirits of just Men made perfect, and to Jesus, the Mediator of the new Covenant. There to sit at God's right Hand, and to hear that blessed Sentence, which the King shall then pronounce upon all that love and fear him, saying, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World.* Which that we may all do, God of his infinite Mercy grant through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, &c.

Matt. xxv.

34.

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## S E R M O N XIX.

### Of our Love of God.

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MATTHEW XXII. 37, 38.

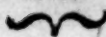
*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind. This is the first and great Commandment.*

**I**T is the great Design and peculiar Excellence of the Christian Religion to raise and advance, improve and perfect human Nature, by giving us Precepts the most rational and divine, and setting before us for our Imitation the highest and most compleat Examples of our blessed Saviour and of God himself.

Perfection is the great End and View of the Christian Course. But we must first finish our Course, before we can attain

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attain Perfection and receive our Reward, a Crown of Righteousness. And the Precept contained in the Text, is the Accomplishment of our Nature, our Glory and our Happiness. But it is observed by St *Austin*, that such Perfection is implied in the Words, as we can only endeavour after in this Life, but shall never attain, till we come to have our perfect Consummation and Bliss in God's eternal Kingdom of Glory.

Our blessed Saviour commands us to love God with all the Powers and Faculties we have; but to love him entirely and perfectly is impossible, while we live in this earthly Tabernacle, and are necessarily concerned and must converse with this World. To love God wholly is the Employment of the blessed Angels and the Spirits of just Men made perfect. To love God worthily exceeds the Power of all the Angels in Heaven; but this they can do, they can love God, as much as they can, and so may we here on Earth, and this we are required to do, unfeignedly to love God with all our Heart and Soul and Mind. *This is the first and great Commandment.*

In discoursing upon which Words I shall observe the following Method.

I. I will consider the Nature and Properties of this Duty in general.

II. Observe the Excellency of this Duty, with respect to God, its Object in particular.

III. I shall give some Reasons, why our Saviour calls this Duty *the first and great Commandment*.

I. I will consider the Nature and Properties of this Duty in general, that is, *to love*.

And to discourse intelligibly and pertinently on this Subject, I am sensible, it would be right to give a Definition of Love, were it a Word of that Kind, which is capable of a proper Definition. But as there are many Things much better understood by Observation and Experience, than by any Rules of Art, and Logic; so the Affection of Love is of that Nature, that it is much more easily perceived and more sensibly felt within us, than it can be defined by any Words, we can use, or the most accurate Explanation possible. It would be a vain and idle Thing, for a Man to go about to define the Pleasure or Pain, we receive by any of our Senses; and to as little Purpose it is, to attempt to define that

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that particular Temper and Constitution of Body and Mind, which we perceive within ourselves, when we are in Love with any Object.

But though Love in general is impossible exactly to be defined; yet it may, and ought to be very carefully distinguished into a pure and chaste and intellectual Affection; and an animal, corporeal, and brutish Passion. The one is seated in our reasonable Nature, the other in our sensitive; the one raises us to a Participation of a divine and heavenly Temper, the other sinks us down into the Condition of brute Creatures; by the former we are made like and do resemble God himself, for *Love is of God,* *and God is love,* as St *John* saith, by the latter we imitate and follow after the Beasts that perish. And in this Sense of the Word Love, as it is a pure and holy Quality, a rational and intellectual Affection, always under the Guidance and Governance of our mature and deliberate Choice and Judgment, I desire to be understood in my Discourse on this Subject. And this I would have remembered and particularly taken Notice of. Under this Acceptation of the Word Love, we may observe the following Properties of it.

1st,

1st, The first Property of Love is to be pleased and delighted with the beloved Object. This is so Essential a Property, that I had almost laid it down as a just Definition of Love, namely, an Affection of Mind to take Pleasure in its Object. I am sure there can be no Love, where there is no true Esteem and Value, Approbation and Liking of the Object; and consequently a proportionable Joy and Delight in it: Much less can there be any Love of what seems despicable, base, and odious to us.

It hath pleased Almighty God in the Formation and Constitution of Things, so to order and dispose their Parts, that we naturally receive Pleasure or Pain from the Sensation or Reflection of the Mind occasioned by them; which for wise and good Reasons he hath so appointed, that thereby we might be moved and excited more readily and chearfully to Action. And what thus naturally pleases and delights us, we necessarily love, and hate its contrary. But we cannot love or hate without Approbation or Dislike, and both these arise from the Nature and Constitution of the Object.

Indeed all Love arises from Esteem, and Esteem from Knowledge, and Knowledge from the Perception of the Nature  
and



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and Qualities of the Object, which we in such Measure admire, love, and adore, as it appears more or less excellent; because what is truly in itself excellent is therefore lovely; and it proceeds from nothing but Ignorance, Stupidity, or Depravity of Nature, that the most excellent and glorious Object is not always the most amiable.

2d, Another Property of Love, which arises from the Esteem and Value we have for the beloved Object, is a studious Imitation and Resemblance of it in our own Behaviour and Conduct. For what we approve of, as worthy and excellent in another, we desire it should appear and shine forth in ourselves. So that all Imitation in this Case is natural. But it too often proceeds from a mistaken Judgment, and is founded upon a false Conception of Things, and of their true Worth and Dignity. And hence some ignorantly admire and imitate the Follies and Foibles, the Imperfections and Vices of others; whereas we should always propose to ourselves the most perfect Examples for our Imitation; because after all our Care and Study to resemble them, the Copy generally falls short of the Original: Besides, by endeavouring  
to.

to imitate the best, we are most secure from sinking into the worst.

But Love not only inclines us to imitate, but puts us upon desiring to possess and enjoy the beloved Object, upon the Account of the Virtue and Excellence, we conceive to be in it. For all Good is not only amiable, but also desirable; because it is useful and profitable, and tends either to the Benefit, or Advancement, or Ornament of our Nature; and therefore we desire a Communion and Participation of all the Dignities and Excellencies of the Being we love.

As we are Creatures we are consequently finite and dependent and insufficient of ourselves for our own Happiness; and therefore we are taught by Nature to seek for it abroad; and the external Objects we meet with we proportionably love, as we conceive them convenient and conducive to our Welfare and Happiness.

This is true of all sensible Objects. But the Objects of our Reason and Understanding are so much the more preferable, as they tend to the Improvement and Perfection of our Souls, our most excellent Part: And especially the supreme Being we ought most highly

highly to esteem and love and desire as our chiefest Good.

3d, A certain Sign and Expression of Love is a benevolent and beneficent Temper, a friendly Disposition of Mind, ready upon all Occasions to do all the good Offices in our Power to the Person we love. This is an infallible Mark. For where this Disposition is wanting, it is all Counterfeit and Hypocrisy to pretend we love another. We may indeed love ourselves in another Person, and for our own Interest and Advantage esteem and value him; but we can have no true Affection for the Person himself and upon his own Account, unless we heartily wish and desire and earnestly endeavour to promote his own proper Good and Happiness.

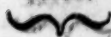
As we all naturally desire our own Happiness, and as the Good of the Person we sincerely love is involved in our own, and inseparably annexed to it, we cannot help wishing and desiring the mutual Happiness of both; and as the Seeds of Love and Affection are naturally sown in our Hearts, and produce their genuine Fruit in every pure and uncorrupted Breast; so it is natural to us, pleasant and delightful to do Good to others; and Charity is so closely united

united with Love, that they both frequently in Scripture signify the same Thing, and the same Greek Word, *Ἀγάπη*, is used to express both; we may be assured that the One cannot exist without the Other.

What we truly love, we love it in its best State; and the more we love it, the more we desire to see it better. If it be amiable for a small Virtue and Excellence, much more is it so, when it attains a higher Perfection. And as the Increase of Love is the Augmentation of Joy and Pleasure, and its Decrease attended with Grief and Trouble; so the Prosperity or Adversity of the beloved Object proportionably raises our correspondent Joy or Grief. The more therefore we love any Person, the more we wish and desire his Welfare and Happiness.

4th, and lastly, I shall mention but one more Property of Love, which is a Desire and Endeavour to please and gratify the Person we love, and an Unwillingness and Fear to displease, offend, or affront him. Whom we love, we are pleased and delighted with, but where can be our pleasure, when he is dissatisfied, provoked and angry with us? How can we rejoice, when he is melancholy and sad? Much rather shall we sympa-





thize with him, and partake of his Grief. Certainly it will be a great Damp to us to have him in Pain and Misery, in whom we place all our Joy and Felicity.

Fire kindles Fire, and Love is most ardent, when it is mutual and reciprocal; whereas Coldness and Indifference on either side gradually extinguishes the Flame. As therefore we prize and value our own Joy, and would not be disappointed of our Happiness, we must wish and desire the Satisfaction and Pleasure of the beloved Person, and make his Joy and Delight our own, as they are bound up with each other by the indissoluble Band of Love.

Hence all the Concernments of the beloved Object we shall make our own, and promote his Interest and raise his Power and Honour, as far as it lies in our Sphere; and do every Thing we can conceive pleasing and grateful and acceptable to him. Hence we shall fear to incur his Displeasure, as our Hopes of Happiness are wrapt up in his Favour: much less shall we dare to condemn, despise, or vilify him, whose Excellences and Perfections will then prove our Ruin. These are some of the chief Properties of Love. I proceed,

II. To observe the Excellency of this Duty with regard to God, the supreme Object of our Love.

Moses, the great Legislator of the Jews, comprised the whole Law in ten Words or Commandments, called therefore the Decalogue; which the wise King Solomon afterwards contracted into two Precepts, the Fear of God, and the keeping his Commandments; for this is the Conclusion he makes of his grand Disquisition about the supreme Good of Man; *Let us hear,* says he, *the Conclusion of the whole Matter,* Ecclef. xii. *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole Duty of Man.* But a much greater Person, than either Moses or Solomon, our most blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, hath further epitomized and abridged the whole Law and the Prophets, and united them into one most easy and delightful Precept, by making *Love the End of the Commandment, out of a pure Heart, and a good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned.* 13.

And as this Duty is the most excellent of all other Graces and Virtues, and as the primary Object of it is the most perfect Being, the great Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the World, and supreme Lord of all; so the Measure and

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gree of this Duty, required from us towards him, is the highest and most exalted we are capable of. We must love *the Lord our God, with all our Heart, with all our Soul, with all our Mind, and with all our Strength*, i. e. with every Power and Faculty, with every Ability and Capacity we have. This is what we are all commanded to endeavour and aspire after; though we can never hope to attain such a Pitch and Perfection of Love in this our imperfect State. But herein appears the excellent Wisdom and Goodness of our blessed Saviour, that he hath given us a Rule, not only very good and useful and necessary, but the best; the most exact, and perfect, we can conceive. And as the State of a Christian in this Life is only a Progression in Virtue; so it conduces very much to our Encouragement and Comfort in a godly Course of living to have in View the End and Design of our Calling, remembering the Example and Words of St Paul, *This one Thing I do, forgetting those Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those Things which are before, I press towards the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ.*

Phil. iii.

13, 14.

We may receive great Benefit and much Advantage by knowing the utmost Perfection

fection of our Love and Duty, which our Lord hath set down in my Text; and it may be of Use likewise to us to observe the least Part of our Duty, consistent with the Words; that we may be certain, when we violate our Saviour's Command. Now no Person can be truly said to love God with all his Heart and Soul and Mind, who loves any Thing God hath forbidden, or who loves any Thing more than God, or who loves any Thing equally with God, or who loves any Thing without God, or not in Subordination to him. Whoever admits into his Breast the Love of any Thing in any of these Ways, cannot properly be said to love God, as our Saviour commands; and therefore is guilty of a Breach of this Commandment. But between the highest Degree of Love towards God, and the lowest, or rather none at all, there are many intermediate Degrees, which are all consistent with this Precept. But I hasten to consider,

The Excellency of this Duty, with regard to God its most excellent Object.

Love in general is the highest Act and Exercise of our noblest Faculty, but moreover it receives a further Dignity from the Excellency of the Object it is placed upon: as a proportionable Love is



owing to the respective Perfection and Virtue of every Person or Thing; so the most elevated Affection is due to the best and most perfect Being. But it is observable, that the Abuse and Corruption of the finest Parts and most useful Qualifications is the most dangerous and mischievous; and so this Grace and Virtue, by being fixed upon wrong and unworthy Objects, degenerates into the most hurtful and sinful Vice.

O! how base and ungrateful is it to pervert and deprave that most excellent Quality and Virtue to the most profligate and wicked Purposes, which was designed by God for our greatest Good and chiefest Ornament, Improvement, and Perfection of our Nature. O! how unworthy is it to settle our Affections upon the most degenerate, deformed and ugly Creatures, upon Sin and Satan and his wicked Spirits, which were ordained to be fixed upon the brightest, the most beautiful, and most adorable Perfections of God and his blessed Children, and upon every conceivable Virtue and Goodness in any of his Creatures. *Shall those Members be yielded as Instruments of Unrighteousness unto Sin, which we, who are alive from the Dead, and whose Bodies are Temples of the Holy Ghost,*

Rom. vi.

13.

1 Cor. vi.

19.

*Of our Love of God.*

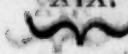
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*Ghost, ought to yield as Instruments of Righteousness unto God?*

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It is most certain that God, as he is the best and most excellent Being, and the Author and Fountain of every Excellence and Virtue visible or imaginable in any of his Creatures, merits our first and greatest and highest Love, and every other Creature, as it approaches nearer to this great Origin of all Perfection, is proportionably lovely. But through In-cogitancy, Ignorance or Stupidity, we may be as insensible and regardless of the divine Perfections, as the brute Beasts. And what we have no Knowledge or Apprehension of, it is impossible we should ever love. Therefore, that we may kindle in our Breasts an ardent Love, and raise our Affections in some sort worthy of the most glorious and transcendent Being, let us fix in our Minds true Notions of God, and of his divine Nature and Attributes: And when we meditate and contemplate upon so bright and beautiful a Being, it is impossible but he must appear the most amiable, adorable, and desirable Being in the World.

Now the most easy and obvious Conception of God Almighty is to believe him to be the most perfect Being we can conceive; that he is possessor of every Vir-

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tue and Excellence imaginable in the highest and most superlative Degree, and that when we have stretched our Thoughts and Conceptions of the most transcendent Excellence to their utmost Extent, he is still infinitely more excellent, than we are able to imagine or conceive. But above all we must be careful to entertain no unworthy Notion of God, to believe no Stain nor Blemish in his most pure and spotless Nature, to impute no Sin nor Imperfection either natural or moral to his most holy and perfect Essence. A Disbelief of God is less criminal, than false and unworthy Notions of him, as that he is in any Respect imperfect, impure, unholy, or unjust. As a Man would chuse never to be heard or thought of at all, than to be remembred and spoken of with Disgrace, Ignominy and Contempt. But we must possess ourselves with a Belief of God, that he is the best and most excellent, the most perfect and glorious and happy Being we can conceive; that he is the greatest Good we can desire; that in the Enjoyment of him, we shall enjoy every other Good; all and more than our Hearts can desire or wish for; that when we are out of his Favour, or under his Displeasure we are ruined and undone. And the Thoughts  
of

of such a Being as this will necessarily render him the most lovely and amiable, desirable and comfortable to our Souls.

If there be any Loveliness in a sensible Object upon Account of some created Excellency in it; if the Perfections scattered and dispersed through the visible World, as so many Rays and Emanations from the inexhaustible Fountain of all Beauty and Light, have any Engagements, any Charms, what Love and Affection does the great Original of all communicated Virtue and Goodness demand from every reasonable Creature, who is capable of apprehending and acknowledging and adoring his divine Nature and Excellence?

But what we truly and sincerely love, we naturally desire to possess and enjoy; but there can be no other Enjoyment of God, but in our Assimilation and Conformity to his Will, and a consequent Participation of his Glories and Excellences. Our immortal Bliss in a future State will not consist in an idle Gazing upon God, but in a Communion of his gracious Influences, our Wills and Affections being always consonant to his Mind and Pleasure; so that we shall ever desire and delight in the same Things, and pursue the same Counsels and Resolutions



lutions with God. The exceeding great and precious Promises which are given us in holy Writ are mentioned by St Peter, as bestowed upon us for this End, 2 Pet. i. 4. *that by these we might be Partakers of the divine Nature; that we may be one with God and God with us; that our sinful Natures being made like unto his glorious Nature, we may evermore dwell in him, and he in us, by mutual Love and Unity and Concord.*

*And whoever hath this Hope in him purifieth himself as God is pure.* He studies to resemble God in all Virtue and Goodness, and to transcribe the divine Excellences, as far as it is possible in this weak and imperfect State, in his own Life and Conversation. For what we love, we naturally imitate, and desire to be like, and studiously endeavour to please. And this Proof and Testimony our Saviour hath laid down of our Love towards God, *that we keep his Commandments.* We may deceive and flatter ourselves about our Love of God from some mistaken Zeal, or violent Heat and Fit of Devotion; but this is an infallible Token, viz. our Care and Diligence to obey God's Laws. *If*

John xiv.

23.

1 John iv.

20, 21.

*a Man love me, he will keep my Words, saith our Lord. And St John saith, If a Man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he*

is

*is a Liar: For he that loveth not his Brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen. And this Commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his Brother also. So that if we would shew our Love towards God, it must be by our Love towards one another. For this first Commandment is inseparable from the second, which is like unto it. But this brings me,*

III. To give some Reasons, why our Saviour calls this *the first and great-Commandment.*

I have already intimated the Dignity and Excellence of this Duty, both in its own Nature, *as it is the End of the Com-* 1 Tim. i.  
*mandment, the Fulfilling of the Law,* accord- 5.  
*ing to St Paul. The royal Law,* as St James Rom. xiii.  
*stiles it; and with respect to God in par-* 10.  
*ticular, as its most excellent Object:* Jam. ii. 8.  
Upon both which Accounts it becomes the highest Act of the most perfect Duty; the Accomplishment and Consummation of our human Nature in everlasting Bliss and Glory, by making us *Partakers of the* 2 Pet. i. 4.  
*divine Nature.*

And this Virtue, with respect to its Duration likewise, is preferred by St Paul before every other Gift or Grace, whether it be the Gift of Tongues, of Prophecy,  
of

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*of Knowledge, of Faith, or Hope; as Love or Charity never faileth; but whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; whether there be Knowledge, it shall vanish away: And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three, but the greatest of these is Charity.*

1 Cor. xiii.

13.

But further, Love or Charity is not only the prime Grace and Virtue, without which every other Duty will find no Favour nor Acceptance with God; for where Love is wanting no Sacrifice of Prayer, or Praise, or of doing Good, can be pleasing to him; but where true Love and sincere Affection, and a hearty Desire to please God, do accompany any Action, though in itself of little Worth and Value, though of an indifferent Nature, nay though a Mistake or Error, it will be well taken, and received with some kind of Approbation, and if it be not rewarded, at least it will be easily pardoned by our good and gracious God, through the Merits of Christ.

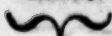
We may in some Measure see the Reason of this in ourselves. For when a Person really does us a Kindness, whom we believe to have no good Will, nor Affection, nor Esteem for us, we do not think ourselves obliged to him for the Favour, nor can we heartily thank him for it:

But

But where an Action proceeds from Love and a Value for us, if it be a Kindness, Love immensely heightens the Obligation; if it be of no Service to us, Love makes it very acceptable to us; should it prove a Prejudice to us, Love easily hides the Mistake, and makes us regard only the good Intention. Love from the meanest Person upon Earth is a Present worthy the Acceptance of the Greatest.

And if we thus judge of Services done to ourselves, who are all of us more or less dependent upon others, and stand in need of their Friendship and Assistance, even the Greatest sometimes supplicating the Favour of the Meanest; if we finite and depending Creatures do value the good Offices of others, according to the Love and Affection they seem to bear towards us, how much more does the great God of Heaven and Earth, who is the Author and Giver of all Things, and can receive no real Benefit nor Advantage from any of his Creatures, regard the Sincerity and good Intention of his Servants, and accept their Worship and Oblations according to the Love and Duty, wherewith they appear before him? We may profit a Man like ourselves by our good Services, but God we cannot benefit by them. It is in the Power of the poorest





poorest Man in the World to be beneficial to the Greatest, if not by some real Act of Service and Kindness, at least by his good Wishes and Desires, by his Prayers and Intercessions with God for him. But not so can the most powerful Person breathing do God any real Service. An upright and honest Heart, a sincere and entire Love, with a grateful Acknowledgment of his infinite Goodness and Bounty, God is best pleased withal. And this Offering the Peasant with the Prince can make to the Almighty. And therefore whatever Service or Obedience towards God we perform, it is Love only that procures it Acceptance. And consequently the *Love of God, with all our Heart and Soul and Mind, is the first and great Commandment.*

John xiv.  
23.

*If a Man love me, he will keep my Words,* saith our Saviour. If we sincerely and heartily love God, we shall keep his Commandments, because it is the Nature and Property of Love to do every thing we think grateful and pleasing to the Person we love. Love is an active Principle within us, and is therefore compared to Fire, because, when kindled in our Breasts, it is always in Motion, and it puts all around it in Motion, and the End of all its Operations, is to please the Person we love.

love. And therefore Love spreads its Influence through all our Actions, and enlivens and invigorates us in the Performance of every Duty. Without this quickning Principle our Spirits would flag and sink in our religious Offices; we should grow careless and remiss in our Duty; the Service of God would seem a Toil and Drudgery to us, and consequently we should soon become tired and uneasy with it, and we should endeavour as soon as possible to free ourselves from it. But while we are actuated by Love in our Devotion, our Prayers and our Praises and Thanksgivings are all joyous and delightful to us; our Duty becomes a Pleasure, and the Service of God the most perfect Freedom. It is then our Meat and Drink to do the Will of our heavenly Father, as our blessed Saviour did; and, with holy *David*, *we take as much Delight therein, as he that findeth great Spoil*. As Love therefore thus influences our whole Duty, we may justly call it *the first and great Commandment*.

But farther; all Religion must be ultimately resolved into the Love of God. For that is not properly Religion which is not done out of a Sense of Duty towards God. A Man may best consult his own temporal Interest and Happiness

by

by living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World, but he does not truly provide for his own eternal Welfare, unless he lives thus out of Love and Obedience to God; nor is he truly a religious Man; because all true Religion supposes the Belief and Love and Fear and Reverence of Almighty God, and Obedience to his Commands, as a due Submission to his Authority. For without a Sense of God in any Action, it ceases to be religious; and therefore *Love, which naturally produces this, is the first and great Commandment.*

But lastly, Love is the primary and great Law of Nature; by it the Universe subsists. What Instinct and Appetite is in brute Creatures, that Love and Affection is in rational Beings. But as the inferior and irrational Part of the animate Creation is governed only by Sense without Reason, or Understanding, or Freedom of Will; so the superior and rational Part are capable of understanding and knowing and foreseeing the Nature and Consequences of their Actions, and of judging and determining about them, and after all can chuse or refuse to act, as they think best; but the first Principle of all their Actions ought to be an universal Benevolence and Love.

And

As God Almighty is the great Creator and supreme Governor of us all, our first and greatest Love is originally due to him, and to all other rational Beings in Subordination to him. This was the great Law of Nature, by which all good and holy Men ever acted from the Beginning of the World, before there was any instituted Religion either Jewish or Pagan in Being. This ultimately was the Intention of the Mosaical Dispensation; this primarily and chiefly, and above every other Precept, was the End and Design of that most holy Institution of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And therefore the Attainment and Performance of this Duty ought to be the Endeavour and Desire, as it is the Accomplishment and Perfection of every Christian. For which End let us conclude all with an excellent Collect of our Church.

“ O God, who hast prepared for them  
“ that love Thee, such good Things as  
“ pass Man's Understanding, pour into  
“ our Hearts such Love towards Thee,  
“ that we loving Thee above all Things,  
“ may obtain thy Promises, which ex-  
“ ceed all that we can desire, through  
“ Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*”



XXIX  
GAIN

As God Almighty is the great Creator  
and Supreme Governor of us all, our first  
and greatest duty is originally due to him  
and to all other rational beings in sub-  
ordination to him. This was the great  
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tention of the Most Holy Creator, and above  
this primary end, chiefly, and above  
every other respect, was the End and  
Design of that most holy Institution of  
our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And  
therefore the Attainment and Perfor-  
mance of this duty ought to be the Re-  
sult and End, as it is the Accom-  
plishment and Perfection of every Chris-  
tian. For which End let us conclude all  
with an excellent Church

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" O God, who hast prepared for them  
that love thee such good things as  
pass Man's Understanding, pour into  
our Hearts such Love towards Thee  
that we loving Thee above all things  
may obtain thy Promises, which ex-  
ceed all that we can believe, through  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

PERMON

D.D

## S E R M O N XX.

Of our Love of our Neighbour.

MATTHEW XXII. 39.

*And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love  
thy Neighbour as thyself.*

**T**HE fundamental Principle and  
sovereign Law of the Christian  
Religion is Love in general, to-  
wards God first and principally, and se-  
condarily towards one another. A be-  
nevolent, friendly and kind Disposition  
of Soul towards all Mankind in general.  
Such an Affection, such an Inclination,  
good and virtuous in itself, and kind and  
charitable towards others, is at the same  
Time a necessary Qualification for Hap-  
piness, and a present Enjoyment of it.  
And accordingly St Paul affirms, *Now the* 1 Tim. i.  
*End of the Commandment is Charity, or Love, &c.*

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*out of a pure Heart, and of a good Conscience,  
and of Faith unfeigned.*

And as all the Affections of our Souls ought to be under the Government and Direction of our Reason; so we justly conclude, that the supreme Good, which is God Almighty, is and ought to be the first and great Object of our Love. Whatever is good and excellent deserves a proportionable Esteem and Love. But Almighty God, as he is the best, most excellent, and perfect Being we can conceive, infinite in his Nature, and all his most adorable Perfections, He challenges our highest Esteem and Admiration and supreme Love. And therefore our blessed Saviour, when he resolved the Lawyer's Question, *Which is the great Commandment in the Law?* said unto him, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind: This is the first and great Commandment.*

Mat xxii.  
37. 38.

Great indeed, even the greatest Commandment of all, is the Love of God; as God is the best and most amiable Object: And could our Affections bear any Proportion with his Excellencies, our Love, together with them, ought to be infinite. But such however must our Love of God be, as to admit of no Comparison of any other Object with him. The Love of  
any

any other Object, of all the World besides, ought not to come in Competition with him. For no Creature, no, not all the Creatures in the Universe, can be compared unto him. And had not God been pleased to create an Object, like ourselves, and required us to love him with the same Affection as we do ourselves, God alone must have been the sole, as He is now the chief Object of our Love. But herein appears the marvellous Goodness of God, that *this Commandment we have from him, that he, who loveth God, love his Brother also.* And for this Reason our Lord, after he had declared the Love of God to be the first and great Commandment, asserts in the Text, *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself.*

1 John iv.  
21.

In speaking to which Words, I shall,

I. Consider the Reason and Obligation of the Duty in general.

II. Observe the Rule and Measure of our Love towards our Neighbour.

I. In considering the Reason and Obligation of the Duty in general, I will, 1st, Lay before you the Obligation all Men are under from the Light of Nature and their own Reason to love one another.



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2dly, I will show you what higher Obligations the Christian Religion hath laid upon its Professors to practise this Duty.

1. I will consider the Reason and Obligation of the Duty in general.

The first natural Obligation of Love and Affection from one Man to another is a Likeness and Resemblance, which all Men bear towards one another; and consequently a Relation and Affinity between each other. A human Body generally consists of all the like Members and Parts, which are all joined and compacted together in the same Manner and by the same Means, and have all the same Situation and Position. And with the like Food and Nourishment this Body is supported and sustained; we all breathe the same common Air, and are enlivened by the same common Heat of the Sun, and live upon the same Bounty and Bignity of Nature. The same natural Desires and Inclinations, Appetites and Passions, are common to us all, and therefore we all partake of the same common Humanity; whence ariseth a mutual Relation and Cognation between us. And hence we may justly conclude, we are all descended from the same first Original. And

And therefore in a State of Nature all Men are naturally Brethren, and consequently obliged to love and to do Good to one another.

It hath been observed, that no one Thing is so like to another, as one Man is to another. But Likeness naturally begets Love; and therefore all Men, who do not degenerate from their Nature, and thwart and contradict it, naturally love one another. Besides our common Humanity engageth us to be useful and helpful and beneficial to each other, as it is our own Nature that suffers, when our Brother is in Want, or in Sicknes, or any Distress.

Again, Love is a Passion the most natural to us, as it is the Source and Spring of all our other Inclinations; and as it is the first Principle of all our Actions. The Love we have for ourselves, or for others, is the great Motive of all our Undertakings. This is a Temper and Disposition of Soul the most easy, pleasant, and delightful to us, and every contrary Inclination gives us Uneasiness, Disturbance and Pain. So that if we would consult our own Tranquillity, Pleasure, and Satisfaction, we should bear good Will and Affection towards all. For an ill-natured, envious, malicious,

*Of our Love of our Neighbour.*

and revengeful Spirit is a Plague and Torment to itself, the very Temper of the Devil.

But to love and to do Good one to another is the Exercise and Employment of the blessed Spirits above, and the State and Constitution of Happiness itself. And as we all naturally desire Happiness, so Nature prompts us to gratify and indulge those Passions and Inclinations, which in themselves tend to make us happy. But no natural Inclination is stronger and more powerful in us than Love, and no Disposition contributes more to our Happiness, than a Desire to promote and advance the Good and Welfare of all Mankind; and therefore were it only to please and comply with our own Desires and Inclinations, we should bear Good-will and Love and Kindness towards all.

Further, the Nature and Condition and Law of our Being, and the Circumstances we are placed in here upon Earth, oblige us to show mutual Love and Kindness to one another. As we are all Creatures, we are consequently finite and dependent Beings, and not only subsist by the Power and Influence of God every Moment of our Lives, for *in him we live and move and have our Being*, and all in common partake of his Bounty and Blessing ;

sing; but we all stand in need of the Help and Assistance of each other. Serm. XX.

To engage us to do mutual good Offices to one another, and to endear ourselves to each other, and to have the Welfare and Happiness of all at Heart, God Almighty by his good and wise Providence is pleased so to order and dispose the Affairs of this World, that we cannot tolerably live with any Comfort and Satisfaction to ourselves, without the Company and Society and Friendship of one another.

There is no Man upon Earth independent and self-sufficient for his own Happiness. Self-sufficiency and Independence, are the Attributes and Perfections of God Almighty only, inconsistent with the Nature of any Creature, even the highest possible for us to conceive; much less may Man pretend to it; As therefore all of us, the highest, as well as the lowest of us, depend upon God principally, and upon our Fellow-Creatures secondarily, as God's Instruments, for our Preservation, Welfare and Happiness, what can be more reasonable, just and equitable, than for us all to study and endeavour to promote the common Good of All, by being loving and kind, and beneficent to all, according to our Abili-



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Abilities and Opportunities; more especially to all who have been serviceable, and friendly, and good towards us?

As it is for our own Good to do Good to others; as we please and gratify ourselves, and comply with the sweetest Disposition and Inclination of our Souls, while we bear Good-will and Love, and Kindness towards all; so by our universal Benevolence towards all, we raise and advance, improve and perfect our Nature, and resemble the best and greatest and most excellent Being we can conceive, even God Almighty himself, in the brightest and most glorious Excellence and Perfection.

Almighty God is an infinite and inexhaustible Fountain of Love; his exuberant Goodness at first inclined him to make us and all the World; and he shewed his particular Favour and Kindness towards us, in enduing us with those most excellent Powers and Faculties of our Souls. But to what Purpose did he bestow on us those superior Faculties of Reason and Understanding, and Freedom of Will, unless it were that we should employ them in serving and worshipping him, and in promoting his Honour and Glory, by doing Good to the Souls and Bodies of Men? To what

End

End did God make Man in his own Image, but that Man might be like and resemble God? But in nothing can Man more resemble God, than in doing Good to all, as God is good to all, and his tender Mercy is over all his Works.

Almighty God extended his infinite Goodness to all his Creatures in their first Formation, he continues his Kindness towards them in their constant Preservation, he more particularly testifies his tender Care and Love towards Man in so plentifully providing for his Subsistence, Satisfaction and Comfort, Pleasure and Delight, by making us Lords and Masters under him over the rest of the Creation. Shall God take such Care of the whole Creation in general, *by giving us Rain from Heaven, and fruitful Seasons, filling our Hearts with Food and Gladness; shall God make his Sun to rise on the Evil and the Good, and send his Rain on the Just and on the Unjust;* and shall not we, in Imitation of such Goodness and Mercy, such Love and Kindness, extend our universal Benevolence towards all our Fellow-Creatures, that stand in need of our Assistance; and be willing and desirous to promote the Welfare and Happiness of the whole World, by doing Good to all, as far as we are capable and able?

2dly,

*Of our Love of our Neighbour.*

2dly, I shall now observe what higher Obligations the Christian Religion hath laid upon its Professors to practise this Duty.

As Nature teaches us to esteem each other Brethren, by being all descended from one and the same first Original, and having all the same common Father and Maker, God Almighty; so Christianity instructs us, that we Christians are more peculiarly and eminently Brethren, as all Children of God by Adoption and Grace, and Heirs of the same Promises. As by Creation God is the Father of all Mankind, so by Redemption and Grace God is the Father of the Faithful only; and consequently all true Christians have a much nearer Relation to God and to one another, than the rest of the World can pretend to. *For our Saviour hath purchased to himself a peculiar People, zealous of good Works; and we being many are one Body in Christ, and every one Members one of another.* And the Life of this mystical Body is the self-same Spirit which quickens and enlivens every Member of it.

As therefore in the natural Body our Care and Concern and Affection extends to every Member of it; so in this spiritual Body all the Members of it should have the

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the same Care for one another: And whether one Member suffer, all the Members should suffer with it; or one Member be honoured, all the Members should rejoice with it.

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Further, as we profess to believe in one God and Father of us all, and as we have one Lord, and there is one Body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one Hope of our Calling. So St Paul beseeches us to walk worthy of the Vocation, where- with we are called; with all Lowliness and Meekness, with long Suffering, forbearing one another in Love. Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, be put away from you; with all Malice. And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you, &c.

Eph. iv.

12, &c.

And God's Example of Mercy and Forgiveness through Christ is frequently set before us in holy Scripture, and highly recommended to us for our Imitation; that as so many, and so heinous Sins and Provocations against God have been forgiven us, so we also should forgive one another. Be ye therefore Followers of God, as the same Apostle exhorts us, as dear Children; and walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us,

Eph. v. 1,

2.



Serm. us, an Offering, and a Sacrifice to God for a  
XX. sweet-smelling Savour.

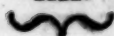
As the Principles and Doctrine of the Christian Religion teach us a nearer Relation to, and a stricter Union with one another in Love, than the Light of Nature could have discovered; so the Precepts and Commands of Christ and his Apostles more fully and expressly require us to love one another, than the Law of Nature did. Love is the peculiar Precept of our Saviour's: *This is my Commandment, saith he, that ye love one another.* This he makes the Characteristic and distinguishing Mark of his Disciples; *by this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye love one another.* This Duty he hath so fully taught and required, so highly improved and advanced, that he calls it a new Commandment; *A new Commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another.* This is the chief Excellence and Perfection of Christianity.

After St Paul had exhorted us to covet earnestly the best Gifts, he adds, *and yet*  
1 Cor. xii. *shew I unto you a more excellent Way.* Which  
31. more excellent Way he explains in the next Chapter, where we read a very high and lofty Encomium of Love or Charity. *Though I speak,* says he, *with the Tongues*  
of

of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal. And though I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity, I am nothing. And for this Reason St Paul prefers Charity before every other Grace and Virtue, because Charity never faileth. But whether there be Prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be Tongues, they shall cease; whether there be Knowledge, it shall vanish away.

And further; Charity is as much preferable to any other Gift or Virtue, as the End is more excellent than the Means made use of to the Attainment of that End. But all other Gifts and Graces are so far only excellent, as they tend to increase and promote our Love and Charity towards one another. Now we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. And now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three, but the greatest of these is Charity.

And we shall see the Reason, why this Preference is given to Charity, if we consider, that Love or Charity is not only required of us, as a Duty most pleasing and acceptable to God, by which we do  
best



best recommend ourselves to the divine Favour and Blessing; but it is, in the Nature of the Virtue itself, a necessary Temper and Disposition of Mind to make us happy, both here and hereafter. For Love is an Affection of Mind by which it is pleased and delighted with its Object; without which there can be no such Thing as Happiness. For the Happiness of any rational Being consists not in any external Circumstances or Condition whatever, neither wholly, nor chiefly, nor in the most essential Part of it; but principally in the inward Temper and Constitution of the Mind: our external Circumstances may add to and encrease our Happiness, but cannot alone constitute it, nor are they the chief Ingredients of it. For let us suppose a Person in the most prosperous Condition of Life, as to outward Circumstances, in perfect Health, in his full Strength and Activity, adorned with all the Graces and Beauties of the Body, and let me add, even of the Mind too, excepting this one Grace and Virtue of Love and Charity; and notwithstanding all his other Accomplishments and Perfections, without this one Virtue, he cannot help being miserable.

For the Happiness of any Being whatever is proportionable to the Perfection  
of

of its Nature. And the Perfection of every reasonable Being is to act conformably to the Nature and Reason of Persons and Things. And our Nature and the Reason of Things necessarily obliges us to mutual Benevolence and Charity, as the supreme Law of our Being; without which it is as impossible for us to be happy, as it is to alter the Frame and Constitution of our Nature. And therefore Benevolence and Love is absolutely necessary to our Happiness; as on the contrary, every envious, malicious, and revengeful Thought in some Degree contributes to our Misery.

II. I come now to consider the Rule and Measure of our Love towards our Neighbour, prescribed by our Saviour in these Words, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself.*

Would you know what kind Love, you ought to have for your Neighbour, consult your own Breast. How are you affected towards yourself? How heartily and sincerely do you love yourself? How readily do you undertake any Office for your own Good, Welfare, or Benefit? With the same Affection love your Neighbour, and according to your Circumstances and Capacity be as willing and desirous



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to promote his Happiness. The Rule is most easy to be understood, and as easily practised, by looking into our own Hearts, how they are disposed towards ourselves, how naturally we wish and desire our own Good; in the same Manner are we to wish and desire the Good of others. So that the Easiness of the Rule to be practised upon all Occasions is a great Commendation of it, and an Instance of the Excellency of the Christian Religion.

Now in this Precept we have, not only a Rule to teach us, what Kind of Affection we should have for each other, but likewise what Degree of it; we are not only instructed what Manner of Love, but also what Measure of it, we ought to bear towards our Neighbour. And both the Manner and the Measure of our Love to ourselves and to one another ought to be the very same, according to the true Interpretation of this Precept, and the full Intent and Meaning of our Saviour in it. As we are commanded to love God in the first Place with all our Heart and Soul and Mind and Strength; so are we in the next Place to love our Neighbour, not only with the like, but with the very same Degree of Affection as ourselves.

I am not ignorant of a different Construction put upon these Words of the Text, and of the Objections, made against this Sense of them. The Particle, *as*, in the Text is believed by some to imply a Similitude or Likeness only, not an Equality of Affection. But it must be observed, that the Law of the Lord is perfect; and therefore it is to be understood in a perfect Sense.

As God is the most perfect Being we can conceive, and eternally loves all Truth and Righteousness, Purity and Holiness, and hates and abhors all Sin and Evil; so all his Precepts and Commands are perfectly right and true, just and good, agreeable to the infinite Rectitude of his Nature, and worthy of him their Author. And therefore what God prescribes and enjoins must be in all respects a perfect Rule of Practice, and the best and fittest to be observed, exactly according to his Will, without any Omission, Defect, or Abatement. And therefore the Precepts of the Christian Religion are to be taught in the highest Degree of Perfection, and not to brought down to a Level with our Weakness and Imperfection. And for this Reason God and Christ are set before us as Examples for our Imitation, whose Perfec-

~ tions we may resemble, but never attain: though the Sincerity of our imperfect Obedience will be accepted through the Merits and Mediation of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

But it is objected, that the Precept is impracticable, if we are to understand by it, that we are to love our Neighbour in all Respects with the very same Degree of Affection, as we love ourselves. Self-love and Self-preservation is the first natural Principle planted in every animate Creature; and Mankind naturally move and act by this Principle, as well as all other Animals. We must divest ourselves of our very Nature, before we can lay aside this Principle. And after all, it is impossible we should be so sensible of the Wants and Necessities of our Fellow-Creatures, as we are of our own. All this is very true, and I readily grant it. But then let it be considered, that our present State is a State of Imperfection, and preparatory only to a future State of Perfection; and that the Gospel-Precepts are given us to raise and advance, improve and perfect our present State: And therefore we are so frequently required in holy Scripture to aim at Perfection. *Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven*

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*is perfect; Be ye holy, as I am holy; Let us go on to Perfection, and press toward the Mark.*

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All which Expressions shew, that the Genius and Spirit of Christianity tends to our Perfection, and that ought to be the Aim and Design of our Lives. Not that we may expect to attain to Perfection in this Life; but that we should make Perfection the End of our Calling: And therefore it is necessary, that the Precepts of the Gospel should be perfect to direct us to Perfection.

Notwithstanding therefore we cannot come up to the full Sense of the Precept in the Text, it is our Duty to come as near it, as we can; and it is much for our Advantage to have a perfect Rule to walk by, as we shall be in no Danger of being misguided by any false Light.

And for our Encouragement in thus practising the Precept of our Saviour, we have the Examples of many, who have shewed such Love to their Neighbour; of *Moses*, who prayed to be blotted out of God's Book, unless God would forgive the Sin of the *Israelites*; Of *St Paul*, who could wish himself accursed from Christ for his Brethren; of our Lord, who was crucified for our sakes;





sakes; and of all holy Men and Women, who have been tortured and martyred for their Religion and the Good of Mankind.

It hath pleased God, that we live in good and peaceable Times, wherein we enjoy our Religion without Danger or Disturbance; the Profession whereof rather tends to our Interest, than our Ruin; but such however ought to be our Affection and Disposition towards God and one another, as to be ready to live or die for our Religion and the common Good: Such a Temper being truly the most happy State on Earth, and will certainly entitle us to the highest Glory in Heaven. For thus by our chearful Obedience and Submission to God's Will, both in Prosperity and Adversity, we shall do him the best and all the Service we are able, and most assuredly recommend ourselves to his Favour, in which consists all our Happiness and true Perfection, which we must endeavour to attain in this Life, and shall fully enjoy in the next, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with the Father, &c.

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